

The big match
Ferentino v Juventus



THE INDEPENDENT

N° 3228

MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY 1997

WEATHER: Heavy showers and strong winds

(IR45p) 40p

INSIDE THE TABLOID

MEDIA+

- Ralph Steadman draws Tory blood
- Television's Mr Clean
- The poshest family in journalism

PLUS: 12 pages of media and marketing appointments



ARTS

Children take over
at Glyndebourne

THIS SECTION, PAGE 12



Tories clear decks for May poll

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major will clear the decks for a 1 May election today with a meeting of senior Cabinet ministers in Downing Street to approve the Conservative election manifesto.

The Prime Minister has ordered the Government's business managers to ensure that its four main law-and-order bills get Royal Assent early next month to avoid the need for horse-trading with Tony Blair in the run-up to polling day.

And to put Labour on the defensive on education, the Government is planning to force a re-run in the Commons of the vote on the Education Bill to give parents the power to expand grant-maintained schools, which it lost by one vote when a whip added up incorrectly.

Ministerial leave has been cancelled for a full-scale Commons vote tonight by Labour over the state of the National Health Service, forcing Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State for Defence, to cut, to a few hours a visit to Hong Kong before flying to Brunton on Wednesday on an arms-trading mission.

To head-off any attempt to bring the Government down before 1 May, Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is expected to announce in the next fortnight new powers for the Northern Ireland grand committee, to meet in Belfast before the election, a move which the Ulster Unionists have been demanding.

Pledges in the manifesto, drafted by David Willetts, chairman of the Tory research department, will include a commitment to send in "hit squads" to take over council housing estates, where there is evidence that councils are failing in their duty.

Some controversial plans,



John Major: Downing Street meeting to approve manifesto

has been put off until after the election, following resistance from the Home Office.

It is likely that more meetings will be needed before the manifesto is finally approved, but those close to Mr Major say he has set his mind on 1 May. The launch could be the Conservative central council in Bath on 14 March, and the dissolution of the Commons around 7 April after the Easter break.

Ministers at today's meeting, who will include Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, and Ian Lang, the President of the Board of Trade, will be asked to endorse plans for expanding nationally the Workstart scheme, on similar lines to the United States Workforce system, which would require the unemployed to work for their welfare benefits.

Health condemned, page 4

Leading article, page 14

such as the privatisation of Channel 4, have been put off. The privatisation of the London Underground is expected to be announced before the election, ready for action if the Tories are re-elected. A Ministry of Agriculture consultation paper on options for reducing Britain's strict anti-rabies measures for

Tony Blair is making an unprecedented second visit to the by-election in South Wirral today, and Brian Mawhinney, the Tory Party chairman, gave a clear hint that the Tories expect defeat in Thursday's poll. "There is a well-established by-election phenomenon and I'm not going to pretend that that doesn't show signs of happening in the Wirral as elsewhere," he said.

Labour has abandoned any plans of forcing a no-confidence vote to demand an election after the by-election result. "There is no point, unless we can guarantee to get the Ulster Unionists voting with us," said a Labour source.

The Tory high command returned from the Birmingham rally encouraged by improved morale among party workers, to focus on closing the gap with Labour. Tomorrow they were planning to return to the attack on Labour over the economy, but that was undermined yesterday by Sir Edward Heath, the former Conservative Prime Minister, who infuriated Tory MPs by endorsing Labour's support for the European social chapter, the minimum wage, and the Scottish parliament.

If Labour wins the election, John Prescott, the deputy Labour leader, is expected to be made Deputy Prime Minister, and is likely to take over a newly merged Department of the Environment and Transport, with charge of local councils and implementing regional policy.

Health condemned, page 4

Leading article, page 14



Towering inferno: Firefighters tackling the blaze at the 36-storey hotel in Bangkok yesterday

90 escape tower blaze

Michael Streeter

Bangkok fire crews battled for nearly four hours to rescue more than 90 workers trapped when flames engulfed a 36-storey building yesterday.

Three people died when two explosions rocked the new hotel and office complex, two of them after jumping from the seventh floor to escape the flames.

Workers said they heard two explosions from the seventh floor of the President Tower in 1990, two thieves dressed up as policemen to steal three Rembrandts, five Degas, and a clutch of other paintings from a museum in Boston. The pictures have never resurfaced.

The Klimt was last seen on Tuesday, but its disappearance was not reported until Saturday.

Page 10

where colleagues were installing air-conditioners. One of those said: "I was on the eighth floor when I heard two big explosions. I rushed down to the staircase and found many people jammed there. Many of them rushed to the top floor."

Up to seven helicopters, hampered by dense smoke and strong winds, took turns dropping ladders and safety-harnesses to workers, who were then winched to safety. Sakorn Sitdee, 28, who was on the 33rd floor when the fire began, said: "People were so frightened, some of them sounded

like they had gone mad, and screamed for help. About an hour later we were picked up."

A colleague, Noi, 45, who was among those trapped on the top floor, said some fainted from the intense heat and had to be revived. More than a dozen others scrambled to safety using ropes to climb down from the middle of the building, which was being decorated. All but six of the 93 people taken to hospital were later discharged. Casualties were kept down because light Sunday traffic allowed emergency vehicles to rush to the scene.

Paedophile lists prompt mob attacks

Ian Burrell

Police efforts to compile a comprehensive register of paedophiles are being hampered by vigilante attacks on suspected child sex offenders.

Paedophiles who have been identified in local newspapers are being attacked by mobs and driven into hiding, out of contact with police and social services. The wave of vigilante action has led to a pensioner with semi dementia being beaten up and covered in blue paint by a gang who mistook him for a paedophile.

Francis Duffy, 67, was attacked close to the Manchester hostel where he lives by a mob shouting abuse and death threats. He suffered a broken wrist, cuts and bruises.

The gang had mistaken him for Brynley Dummett, who has six convictions for sex offences and bears a physical resemblance to Mr Duffy.

Dummett was named and pictured in the *Manchester Evening News* three months earlier in a warning to residents of the Ancoats housing estate that a convicted paedophile was living in their midst.

He was driven out and moved to Chorlton-on-Medlock, also in Manchester, where local women visited schools and houses distributing his picture. A mob went in search of the sex offender but attacked Mr Duffy. After the attack on Mr Duffy, Dummett fled and the police have no knowledge of his whereabouts.

The *Manchester Evening News*, which has published the names of two other local paedophiles, argues it is reflecting the public concern. Yesterday its editor, Michael Unger, a member of the Scott Trust, which owns the *MEN* and the *Guardian*, said he accepted no responsibility for the incident. Hugo Young, chairman of the trust and a *Guardian* columnist, said it was a matter for editors.

In Birmingham, the local *Evening Mail* newspaper is also running a campaign to identify local paedophiles and a Birmingham council official was suspended after notifying residents of a housing estate that a child sex offender was living among them. The sex offender moved out following demonstrations by local residents.

Other paedophiles have been driven from their homes by vigilantes in Llandudno, north Wales, Middlesbrough and Stirling, Scotland.

The Stirling paedophile was moved from his bed-and-breakfast accommodation following a demonstration by 35 protesters after the education authority sent a warning notice about the man to nearby schools.

In Reading, a burglar who was made to wear a tagging device was attacked by a gang after a media story that a sex offender in the town was made to wear a similar tag.

It is feared that the vigilante attacks may escalate if a private publisher is allowed to go ahead with plans to issue a directory of British paedophiles. The Government is also considering proposals to allow publication of the names and addresses of child sex offenders. Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, has said a police-run national register of paedophiles will be drawn up.

Tony Butler, chief constable of Gloucestershire and the spokesman on child protection issues for the Association of Chief Police Officers, warned:

"There are real dangers of public over-reaction and violence. Such action could drive offenders underground."

Harry Fletcher, deputy general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, agreed: "If they [paedophiles] are under supervision we can see the warning signs, but if they are driven out of town no one knows where they are or what they are up to."

GOLDSMITHS
Aberdeen · Bath · Brighton
Bromley · Chelmsford
Cheltenham · Chester
Ealer
Gateshead
Gifford · Harrogate
Leicester
Llandudno
Nottingham
Tunbridge Wells
Wales
Wigan · Wirksworth
London Balmoral
MONTGOMERY
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Wrexham · Ross
Aberdeen · Cardiff
Dudley · Bury
Leicester · Lincoln
Middlesbrough
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Nottingham · Oxford
Sheffield · Swindon
Tunbridge Wells
ALFRED CHILCOTT & CO.
Brent
PATRICK & SONS
Bedford · Sheffield
MANNERY & CO.
Cambridge
STRAND
Caversham
GEO PARKER LTD
Tunbridge Wells
NORRIS
Shrewsbury
GEO ATTENBOROUGH
London
J. HASKELL
Ipswich
BREWER & STODHAM
Reading
GREENWOOD JEWELLERS
Leeds

ROLEX

There are only
so many official
Rolex jewellers.

How come
so many of them
are ours?



GOLDSMITHS



WALKER & HALL

The first officially appointed Rolex stockists in the UK. The Goldsmiths Group is probably the country's leading chain of quality jewellers and has over 40 branches which stock Rolex. To find your nearest Rolex stockist, call FREE on 0800 220752.

CONTENTS
THE BROADSHEET
Business & City
Comment
Crossword
Features

Foreign News
Gazette
Guide to the Week
Home News
Leading Articles

9-11 Letters
16 Obituaries
20 Shares
2-8 THE TABLOID
14 Bridge

14 Crossword
16 Games
17 Listings
Radio & TV
26 Weather

26
26
24,25
27,28
26

9

9 770951 946412

significant shorts

POA warns of security danger at Broadmoor

Security at Broadmoor special hospital, which houses some of the country's most dangerous criminals, is at "breaking point", according to a new report by the Prison Officers' Association.

The report - sent to Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health, a week ago - warns of a "dangerous" situation. Andy Gossage, who chairs the POA's special hospitals group, and the author of the report, said yesterday: "We're concerned about abuse of privileges by patients, dangerous staffing levels, the amount of staff leaving the job, and the amount of inexperienced staff coming into the job, which makes it dangerous."

The POA has asked Mr Dorrell - who has ordered an inquiry into paedophile allegations at Ashworth Special Hospital, Merseyside - to investigate the problems at Broadmoor and England's other top security hospital, Rampton, as well. But a Department of Health said there were no plans to do so.

Bellamy joins Referendum Party

The naturalist and environmental campaigner David Bellamy has given the Referendum Party a boost by agreeing to stand against John Major in his Huntingdon constituency at the general election. Dr Bellamy (pictured) who joins zookeeper John Aspinall and actor Edward Fox as high-profile supporters, has eagerly embraced the philosophy of the party set up by Sir James Goldsmith. He said: "I am worried about the sovereignty of the country I have lived in for 63 years becoming part of a Federal State of Europe. People have died to keep this country's democracy but that is now being eroded. When I read the Referendum Party's material I thought it can't really be as bad as that but I came to the conclusion that it was."

Thomas Harding
Minister in gay marriage plea

A Government minister has called for gay couples to be allowed to enter into a legal contract similar to marriage.

Speaking on Radio 5 Live's gay programme *Out This Week*, transport minister John Bowis said: "There are difficulties in quite a lot of areas of social law in that there isn't a legal contract in gay relationship, any more than there is in an unmarried heterosexual relationship. It may be that if one is able to achieve some sort of legal contract that would provide a stability." Asked if that was something he would like to see, he replied: "That something I'd like to see, yes." Mr Bowis, who is married with three children, has repeatedly condemned prejudice against homosexuality and supports the reduction of the age of homosexual consent to 16.

Road protester in treehouse blaze

A road protester was in a "poorly" condition in hospital last night after suffering serious burns when his treehouse caught fire. Stephen Anderson, 39, was injured when the two-level tree dwelling caught fire at a road protest camp at Rye Loaf Hill, Bingley, West Yorkshire. The fire is believed to have sparked accidentally by a butane gas lighter.

Midland banks on new identity

Midland Bank began the process of banishing its familiar yellow and blue griffin logo from high streets yesterday with newspaper advertisements welcoming readers to the "new" Midland Bank. At a cost of around £1.5m, Midland is introducing what it calls a "smart new corporate identity", symbolised by a simple red and white hexagon. The logo belongs to HSBC, the banking giant which bought Midland in 1992 for £3.9bn, and will eventually appear on all Midland products from stationery to cheque books.

Very significant shorts for Navy

Summer has come early for the men and women of the Royal Navy in Hong Kong - and they are not amused. Military commanders in the colony have issued an order that summer uniforms have to be worn with immediate effect, and for the Navy that means standard white shorts and long socks, even though the weather in February can be chilly. A military spokesman said the decision stemmed from the arrival of the Black Watch as the last Army battalion before the handover. "It was decided that, as they were coming for just a few months, it would greatly reduce the amount of clothing they needed to bring if they wore summer uniform. Consequently, all forces now have to wear summer uniform."

Eight share Lottery jackpot

Saturday's National Lottery jackpot of £7,335,320 will be shared by eight winners, all of whom win £916,915. Thirty-seven punters with five numbers plus the bonus ball, each win £61,000; 1,912 tickets with five winning numbers get £737; 88,555 tickets with four correct numbers win £35; 1,16,605 ticketholders win £10 for three correct numbers. The winning numbers were 5, 23, 8, 1, 9, 27; bonus ball 22.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Austria ... 50p/40 NLands ... £15.00
Belgium ... 25p/30 Italy ... £4.500
Caribbean ... £1.200 Mexico ... £1.205
Cyprus ... £1.120 Malta ... 43 cents
Denmark ... £1.119 Norway ... £6.20
Ireland ... £1.15 Portugal ... £1.205
France ... £1.14 Spain ... £1.200
Germany ... £1.14.5 Sweden ... £1.21
Greece ... £1.15.5 Switzerland ... £1.200
Luxembourg ... £1.16 USA ... £3.00

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS
Air mail, 13 weeks: Europe £11.076, Zone 1 (Middle East, America, Africa and Israel £11.408), Zone 2 (Far East and Australasia) £10.70. To order, please send cheque payable to *International Media Services Ltd*, 10-12 Millbank, London SW1P 4TR or telephone 0171-538 6295. Credit cards welcome.

BUK NOTES
Back issues of the *Independent* are available from Historic Newspapers, telephone 01988 840210

people

Westwood's latest fashion statement - Lolitas in tweed

Charlotte: Hae Westwood found the next supermodel?
(Photograph: Ben Elwes)

Yorks united on pistes of Verbier

The Duke and Duchess of York and their daughters, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, put on a united front yesterday, on the final day of their skiing holiday in Verbier, in the Swiss Alps.

There is mounting speculation that the duke and duchess - who divorced last year - and the princesses may all live together under the same roof again.

Whether their first joint public appearance since August last year is a dry run for a future house-share is unclear.

But it is understood that moving back to Sunninghill Park, the former marital home, was one of several options being considered as the duchess prepares to move from her current rented home. A spokeswoman for the duchess last night said she was to quit six-bedroom Kingsbourne on the Wentworth Estate, near Windsor.

The duke and duchess, who have remained close friends since their divorce, are reported to be in a house-sharing arrangement which would benefit their daughters, aged eight and six.

But their domestic arrangements seemed a million miles from their thoughts as the family took advantage of spring sunshine and ideal skiing conditions in the Alps.

Youngest of the Bridgewater Three savours his freedom

Michael Hickey, youngest of the Bridgewater Three, emerged from the home of his mother, Ann Whelan (right) yesterday in Wythall, Worcestershire, after tasting his first 48 hours of freedom. With his arms around her outside her cottage, he said: "It's still all a bit new to me and a bit confusing."

Mrs Whelan, who campaigned tirelessly for her son, said: "It's all mixed emotions at the moment. We are all a bit up and down. We are trying to get round and see family and friends. There just isn't a minute to think."

Lawyers for Mr Hickey, his cousin Vincent and James Robinson have demanded £50,000 to fund urgent psychiatric care for them. And police involved in the case are under mounting pressure to apologise for allegedly falsifying confessions.

Jim Nichol, solicitor for the freed man, said they were already running into psychological trouble after the initial euphoria of their release from 18 years' incarceration on Friday. He was "disgusted" that the Home Office had not offered to fund treatment for the men, who left prison with £46 each and none of the usual counselling offered to long-term inmates.

But their domestic arrangements seemed a million miles from their thoughts as the family took advantage of spring sunshine and ideal skiing conditions in the Alps.

The £50,000 payment is being

Charlotte Westwood flaunted convention yet again yesterday, with her Red Label collection at the Dorchester Hotel marking the beginning of London Fashion Week. And with London currently enjoying its renewed reputation as the most swinging city in the world, the Westwood show attracted more international press and buyers than ever before.

They, of course, had come to witness not only the clothes, but the girls modelling them. News that the designer had chosen 25 girls between the ages of 13 and 17 proved slightly inaccurate. The youngest were 13, but the oldest were a more conventional 21. They were being transformed from schoolgirls into blooming English roses backstage, while their mothers looked on.

Lara Copatti, 13, from Surrey was more self-assured than many of the older girls. "As soon as you can make up your mind to do something, you can do it," she said. Her mother could only nod in agreement.

Meanwhile, Valerie Riley's two daughters, Lucie, 15, and Serena, 20, were both preparing to model in the show. "I wouldn't have let them do it unless I felt they were mature enough," she said, before giving journalists her business card - for her own modelling agency - representing her daughters, of course.

But the other 13-year-old model was the mysterious Charlotte, who was kept closely guarded by Jonathon Phang of Spirit Management, agent to supermodel Jodie Kidd. He refused to divulge any information on his young charge, except that she was old enough to be doing the show, and attended a school in Windsor.

Westwood couldn't have hoped for more of a stir than that created by the use of very young models. The clothes she put them in were the embodiment of decency. There was not an inch of flesh on display; unlike her past Paris shows, which are renowned for the appearance of bare-breasted, or almost nude models. The clothes on show yesterday were the opposite: very wearable, womanly and pure Westwood. Curvy tweed jackets with more than a passing reference to Miss Jean Brodie and Queen Elizabeth I were worn with ple-crust frilled blouses, knickerbockers and A-line skirts in the colours of the English countryside. Clingy dresses displayed only the merest hint of cleavage, and legs were covered at all times by thick tights.

Joan Spivey, whose daughter, Ruth, 15, was extremely happy for her to be taking part. When asked whether she approved of the clothes, she said: "Ruth has to wear quite a short skirt, but it's no shorter than anything you see on the high street."

Westwood may not be able to change the way street fashions can put all teenagers in the same look, but she may have changed the way her young models dress in the future. They each received £150 in clothing vouchers, and probably their first Westwood clothes. It could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

Melanie Richey

briefing

HOME AFFAIRS**Irish face discrimination in criminal justice system**

Members of the Irish community in mainland Britain are subject to widespread discrimination in the criminal justice system, according to research published today. The report - published by a consortium including the National Association of Probation Officers, the Bourne Trust and the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas - claims that those of Irish descent are more likely to be stopped by police in inner cities than any other ethnic group.

Furthermore, the research claims that the Irish are the group most likely to be the victim of a street crime and are disproportionately represented among miscarriages of justice.

The 56 case histories used in the report detail many instances of stop, search and overnight detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which generally resulted in release without charge. Others reveal inappropriate remands into custody, longer sentences than normal and the harassment of Irish travellers.

UNIONS**Membership declining fast**

Trade unions need to recruit 500,000 members before the millennium if they are to halt a long-term decline in membership, according to a report out today. Membership has slipped by more than 1.7 million since 1989 and stood at 7.3 million in 1995.

Unions need to target new sectors to stem the fall, said the report, *Facing the Future*, drawn up by the TUC.

It blamed the drop on the decline in manufacturing industry, more part-time and temporary jobs, high unemployment and a hostile political climate during the 1980s which led to anti-union legislation.

Union membership fell most dramatically among male and manual employees and those in production industries, the report added. Membership levels among women, part-time workers and non-manual employees have been less affected.

The report said unions ought to target the growing sectors of employment including professionals, women and part-time workers, as well as those in personal and protective services, which are set to soar by the year 2001.

**EDUCATION****Failure to cut teenage pregnancy**

Sex education is too little and too late, and is failing the nation's young people, claim the authors of research published today. More open discussion of sex could cut teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, delay the average age that youngsters become sexually active and lead to better use of contraceptives, according to a survey funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The authors of the report called for the provision of more family planning clinics geared specifically towards young people, and dealing with controversial issues like homosexuality and abortion.

Comparison of British and Dutch youngsters showed that those in Holland - where teenage pregnancy rates are considerably lower - had earlier and more open sex education, both in the home and at school. The Dutch youngsters had more confidence discussing sex, contraception and the dangers of HIV with partners before intercourse and had more close friends of the opposite sex.

The survey involved 230 interviews and an analysis of more than 17,500 teenage pregnancies in the Wessex area between 1991 and 1994.

ECONOMY**Poor links to air and sea ports**

Britain's economic success is threatened by poor road links to air and sea ports, says a report out today. A special fund should be set up by the Government to implement the schemes to "unblock the arteries that sustain continued economic prosperity", said the British Road Federation.

The federation also called for a greater proportion of the growing tax taken from transport users to be specifically used to improve the nation's infrastructure.

The report said UK ports handled 550m tonnes of freight in 1995 - a 100m-tonne increase on 1985, as well as 1.6m goods vehicles, 7.6m cars and 235,000 buses and coaches. Meanwhile, UK airports handled 115m passengers in 1995 - 87 per cent more than in 1985, while freight-handling rose 105 per cent, from 802,000 tonnes in 1985 to 1,61m tonnes in 1995.

If Terminal 5 was built at Heathrow airport, it added, further improvements would be needed to public transport and roads, over and above those already proposed. There was also need for better links to Manchester airport, which is to get a new runway.

NATURE**Threat to swans remains**

Swans face a growing threat from discarded fishing tackle, 10 years after the introduction of a law to protect them, a conservation group has warned. Some 720 had to be treated for injury and poisoning through tackle left by careless anglers in just nine months of last year, according to a report by the National Convention for the Welfare of Swans and Wildlife.

The casuality figures were the worst since the sale of lead shot was banned in 1987, said the convention, whose volunteers work from 30 swan rescue centres throughout Britain.



sought on top of six-figure compensation sums expected for their wrongful convictions.

Mr Nichol said: "I saw Michael deteriorate on Friday. He has been in psychiatric institutions for probably more than half of his prison life. It's very difficult for them. Jim's an old man; Michael's lost his youth."

Vincent Hickey also suffered

clinical depression and attempted suicide after they were jailed for the murder of paperboy Carl Bridgewater on convictions that are almost certain to be quashed. Thomas Harding

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

To join, call free now on

0800 444 445

and ask for extension 6172. Immediate cover available.

Internet: <http://www.thesaa.co.uk/theaa>



AA

**Get yourself AA protection from just £39***

With AA personal membership, all-round protection offers...

• Cover even when driving someone else's car or when travelling as a passenger.

• roadside help whether your vehicle is immobilised as a result of a breakdown or accident, (including theft or vandalism).

• Over 80% of all breakdowns fixed at the roadside.

• Priority to members in vulnerable situations.

• Day-and-night, year-round service from the UK's leading motoring assistance organisation.

Call us today and you could save £6

Now, if you pay annually by direct debit or continuous credit card authority, AA

protection can be yours from just £39* a year.

That's the equivalent of only £3.25 a month, and is £6 off the cash-payment price of £45.

To join, call free now on

0800 444 445

and ask for

brilliant
STAINS
face discrimination
criminal justice system
orship declining fast



That nice Alan Bennett takes the gloves off for Tory politicians, the Queen Mother – and Dennis Potter

Ian Burrell
and Jojo Moyes

Alan Bennett, in his original edition, said that he wanted to be "liked and thought a nice man".

New extracts from the revised edition, however, will do nothing to endear him to many prominent figures in the worlds of politics, literature and entertainment.

He jokes at the expense of the Queen Mother, professing a desire to kick Michael Heseltine in the backside and describes the writer AN Wilson as "a silly prat".

A revised version of his successful diary, *Writing Home*, is to be published by Faber next month.

Most of the playwright's vitriol is reserved for Conservative

politicians, with Baroness Thatcher and her "cronies" standing accused of having "uncivilised debate and denatured the nation".

Lord Tebbit is dismissed as a "sneer on legs, snarling and heaping contempt on any vaguely liberal view", while the Conservative MPs Tony Marlow and Edward Leigh are described as "fat and complacent and looking like two cheeks of the same ass".

The backside of the Michael Heseltine is also a prime target for Bennett's boot. Or in the words of the playwright's father, he would like to "kick Fitton" the Deputy Prime Minister.

Reminiscing, Bennett explains that his father had an aversion to using swear words but overcame the problem

while an air-raid warden during the Second World War.

Joe Fitton, a fellow warden who was not normally known for bad language, lost his temper one night and said he would like to give the source of his anger "a right kick up the arse".

The expression "to Joe Fitton" was adopted by the Bennett family, and the playwright reveals his wish to do some "Joe Fittoning" to Mr Heseltine and Cedric Brown, the chairman of British Gas.

But Bennett does not restrict his line of fire to the Houses of Parliament. The man once described as "the kind of writer that mothers like" is quite prepared to snipe at his peers.

AN Wilson aroused Bennett's ire with an article in the

London *Evening Standard* which compared the Yorkshire-born playwright to Liberace and Cliff Richard.

Bennett hits back at the perceived slur by recording his response in a new extract to the diaries: "You silly prat" is what I feel, wondering how anyone who writes for such a rag as the *Standard* feels in a position to say anything about anybody."

Another writer, Lord Archer, is disparagingly compared to the comedian Bernard Manning.

Peter Cook, the late satirist, is affectionately mocked for his "deeply embarrassing" attempts to impersonate Elvis Presley and to quote passages of Shakespeare by heart.

Bennett also passes com-

ment on his late friend's vanity. "Slim and elegant in those days, [Cook] was also quite a joker in the face of bigoted opposition," Bennett observes. "The frail faltering flame of heterosexuality always in danger of being snuffed out by the hot homosexual wind."

Establishment figures described with rather less reverence. Bennett quotes a joke about the Queen Mother in an old people's home and not being treated with the proper respect. The joke goes: "Queen Mother: Don't you know who I am? Nurse: No, dear, but if you go over and ask the lady at the desk she'll probably be able to tell you."

Writing Home topped the best-seller list and has sold more than 750,000 copies. The

age of consent for gay sex lauds the "civilised and courageous" words of Labour's Chris Smith in the face of bigoted opposition.

He visibly conformed to what the public thinks artists ought to be – poor or promiscuous, suffering or served."

Despite the potshots at others in the new extracts, Bennett is not short on self-deprecation.

He recalls how his pride got the better of him while he sat in a car in Yorkshire waiting to acknowledge a fan, waving towards him with a smile on her face.

To Bennett's surprise, the woman actually climbed into the seat beside him before exclaiming: "Only in Yorkshire ... bloody hell! I'm in the wrong car!" and rustled off to her waving husband.

Bennett writes: "The person who is really shown up by the story is, of course, me."

newspaper he responded with typical wit by rejecting a subsequent interview request, saying "winsome, lose some".

And despite the potshots at others in the new extracts, Bennett is not short on self-deprecation.

He recalls how his pride got the better of him while he sat in a car in Yorkshire waiting to acknowledge a fan, waving towards him with a smile on her face.

To Bennett's surprise, the woman actually climbed into the seat beside him before exclaiming: "Only in Yorkshire ... bloody hell! I'm in the wrong car!" and rustled off to her waving husband.

Bennett writes: "The person who is really shown up by the story is, of course, me."

First cloned lamb paves way for life by production line

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

British scientists confirmed yesterday that they have cloned an adult sheep from a single cell, to produce a lamb with the same original genes as its "mother".

But important questions remain about the viability of animals produced by this method, and about the possibility that they may be more prone to cancers and that flocks of them might have lowered resistance to natural diseases.

The breakthrough, the first time such cloning has been achieved in the world, was the work of scientists at the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh and biotechnology company PPL Therapeutics, and builds on work done there last year.

The first of the cloned sheep, Dolly, was born a few weeks ago – but comes from an animal which is six years old. That means that its genes have already been damaged by cosmic rays and environmental toxins, meaning they could develop

cancers abnormally early. Also, a genetic "fuse" on the chromosomes, called the telomere – which burns down one step every time the cell divides – will have shortened so radically that the animal could die abruptly. Sheep on farms normally have a lifespan of less than 10 years.

Dr Ian Wilmut, who led the research team at the institute, said last night that there was no data yet about the effects of genetic damage and telomere shortening.

The immediate application of cloning will be to study ageing, cancer and genetics, and to produce medicines. But it opens up the possibility of a bizarre world in which people can be copied and animals are "made" on a production line – as described in Aldous Huxley's novel, *Brave New World*.

The scientist started with cells taken from an adult animal and slowed down the division of the chromosomes in the nucleus. They then took unfertilised egg cells, removed their nucle-

us – which contains the genetic material of the egg's mother – and inserted the nuclei of the original adult cells. This cloned cell was implanted in a ewe, and produced a total of eight lambs. Both male and female sheep can be produced by this process.

In theory, the same principle could be used with human cells and eggs. However, it would be illegal to clone a human under the present law, and attempts to clone animals can only be performed under licence from the Home Office.

Dr Wilmut said: "The idea of cloning humans is just fanciful. All of us would find it completely unacceptable to work with human embryos. It's important that inappropriate use of this technology is prohibited."

"We shouldn't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Britain should be celebrating this advance which offers commercial opportunities for companies here and potential healthcare products for British patients."

Scientists concerned with ethical issues said yesterday

that it may be necessary to introduce laws against the cloning of animals for "production purposes". Dr Donald Bruce, a research chemist who chairs a committee on Science, Religion and Technology for the Church of Scotland, said: "I don't have any objections to the genetic modification, to the experiment ... But to turn them out like a production line of widgets seems to lose something of the individual dignity of the animal, to lose respect for it."

Last year, scientists at the institute produced cloned sheep by implanting cells taken from an embryo into an egg cell. That produced mixed results, with unusually large animals and a number of deaths at birth. The new technique appears to be more efficient. Only one of the clones died at birth, and that showed no signs of infection or abnormality.

PPL Therapeutics, which has bred genetically engineered sheep able to produce human proteins in their milk, said it was "a major scientific advance".

Species, which also sponsored the research, are to undertake a consultation process with the Game Conservancy Trust and other interested parties about the likely effect of returning pine martens to England.

Ian Burrell

Ecologists are preparing the way for the first reintroduction of a carnivore into England. The pine marten, also known as the tree weasel, is believed to have died out in England and Wales where it was common less than 200 years ago.

The small nocturnal creatures were killed off by hunters for their expensive fur coats, or by game-keepers who saw them as a threat to gamebirds.

A two-year study, funded by English Nature, has identified four sites in England where the biological conditions are suitable for colonies of pine martens to be re-established.

Reintroduction could be controversial because of the potential threat of a new carnivore to the conservation of rare birds and to game-rearing.

The leader of the research team, Dr Paul Bright, an ecology lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London, stressed that no re-introduction would take place until a final assessment had been made of the pine martens' likely impact on other animals.

English Nature and the People's Trust for Endangered

the availability of food in the form of voles and rabbits – are even better in some sites than in Galloway.

The location which has most impressed the English Nature team is at Kielder, in Northumberland, where there is a large coniferous forest close to the North Tyne.

Kielder is also regarded as a safe location for the animals because of the low risk of them meeting a violent death from roads or animal traps.

The other three English sites which are under consideration are the Forest of Dean, the woodlands to the south and east of Dartmoor and in the Weald at Heathfield, East Sussex.

If the pine marten were to be resettled it would be the first time a carnivore which had ceased to exist in England had been reintroduced.

The nearest comparable exercise was the reintroduction of otters in East Anglia, although they continued to survive in other parts of England.

Pine martens (*Martes martes*) are close cousins of otters, badgers and polecats. They spend most of the day in their lairs in hollow trees, rock fissures or disused birds' nests.



Hello Dolly: Cloned from six-year-old sheep. Photograph: PA

Comeback plans for 'extinct' tree weasel



Pine Marten: Scottish colony

Ecologists are preparing the way for the first reintroduction of a carnivore into England. The pine marten, also known as the tree weasel, is believed to have died out in England and Wales where it was common less than 200 years ago.

The small nocturnal creatures were killed off by hunters for their expensive fur coats, or by game-keepers who saw them as a threat to gamebirds.

A two-year study, funded by English Nature, has identified four sites in England where the biological conditions are suitable for colonies of pine martens to be re-established.

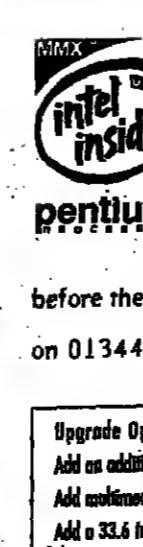
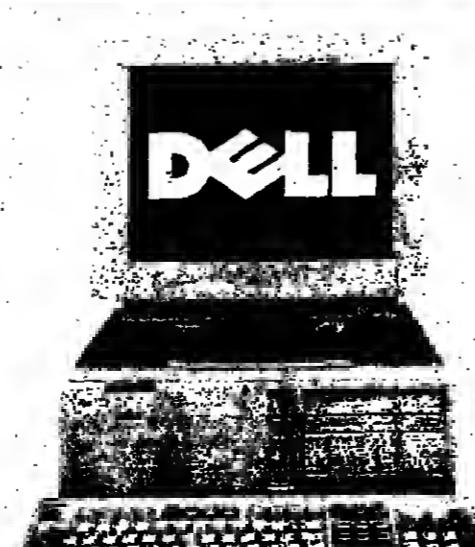
Reintroduction could be controversial because of the potential threat of a new carnivore to the conservation of rare birds and to game-rearing.

The leader of the research team, Dr Paul Bright, an ecology lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London, stressed that no re-introduction would take place until a final assessment had been made of the pine martens' likely impact on other animals.

English Nature and the People's Trust for Endangered

Techno Wizardry. Magic Price.

DELL DIMENSION XPS M200s
• INTEL 2.0DMHz PENTIUM® PROCESSOR WITH MMX™ TECHNOLOGY
• 16Mb SDRAM
• 512Mb CACHE
• 3Gb EIDE HARD DRIVE
• STB POWERGRAPH 64 3D PCI GRAPHICS CARD WITH 2Mb VIDEO MEMORY
• 15" COLOUR SVGA MONITOR (13.75" VIEWABLE AREA)
• TWELVE SPEED CD-ROM DRIVE
• MID-SIZED DESKTOP CHASSIS
• INTEGRATED 16-BIT SOUND
• WINDOWS 95 & MICROSOFT OFFICE PROFESSIONAL 95
£1,299 (£1,555.70 incl. delivery & VAT)



Incredible isn't it? With its fantastic spec and for only £1,299 (£1,555.70 incl. del. & VAT), we're offering a Dell Dimension XPS M200s with a Pentium® Processor with MMX™ technology. Because it comes with MMX technology, it can run between 10% and 20% faster under today's normal business applications. It includes a powerful 12 Speed CD-ROM Drive and a 3Gb Hard Drive. And, as if this wasn't enough, we're also offering additional upgrades at outstanding prices (see below to upgrade this system further). But you must hurry before the offer vanishes. Call the world's largest direct PC manufacturer* today on 01344 724864 to see what Dell can conjure up for you.

*Source: IDC

TALK DIRECT TO THE NUMBER ONE.
01344 724864
Between 8am and 8pm weekdays, 10am to 4pm Sat.
<http://www.dell.com>

Dell and the Dell logo are registered trademarks and Dell Dimension is a trademark of Dell Computer Corporation. The Intel Inside logo and MMX is a trademark of Intel Corporation. Microsoft, Windows, Office, Professional 95 and the Windows logo are registered trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation. Delivery or £25 (£29.57 incl. VAT) per system. Finance is available subject to status. Full details available on request. Prices correct at date of publication. The photographic product may not always match the specifications in this adver. Please amend refer to specification descriptions online. The prices listed reflect the information available at the time of going to press. Prices change frequently. All prices and specifications are subject to change without prior notice or obligation. Offer supplied with Windows 95. Dell mouse and keyboard included. Dell Computer Corporation Ltd, Milbank House, Western Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1BD. Offer available for a limited period only.

news

Labour pledges £20m US-style literacy drive

Judith Judd

Education Editor

Literacy programmes in America, New Zealand and Australia will provide the blueprint for Labour's ambitious plans to retrain all primary teachers to teach reading in its drive against illiteracy to be announced this week.

Writing in today's *Independent*, Professor Michael Barber, head of the party's literacy task-force, makes clear that teachers will be retrained to use prescribed reading methods including phonics (matching sounds and letters) and whole class teaching. The programme will involve more detailed control of how teachers teach than has ever been attempted before.

Labour will also make an hour a day on literacy compulsory for all primary schools when the national curriculum is revised in 2000.

Labour's plans are the latest in the pre-election battle over education. The Prime Minister disclosed the Conservatives' latest proposals on Saturday when he said that marks out of a hundred in national tests will be published for all pupils instead of the present grades which cover a wide range of marks.

Professor Barber describes how a systematic approach to teaching reading pioneered by Bob Slavin at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, has raised standards in 475 schools in the US. A similar approach has also succeeded in Victoria, Australia. In both programmes, teachers aim to surround children with large numbers of books and the pace of teaching is quick.

Labour's national literacy targets will include bringing 80 per cent of 11-year-olds up to the expected standard in national English tests by 2001. At present 43% fail to reach the target. The party wants all children to reach it by the end of two Labour governments. Labour has costed literacy changes at £20m a year which would be redirected from other parts of the education budget.

Questioned on BBC 1's *The Frost Programme* yesterday, David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, said: "It is getting it right from the beginning, using the right methods, setting aside an hour a day and having targets that make it possible for us to lift our horizons."

The Government's national literacy project has already introduced a "literacy hour" as well as a bigger emphasis on phonics and grammar in a small number of pilot schools but Labour's plans go much further.

A spokesman for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers said: "Primary teachers are already concentrating intensely on literacy. They will be upset to hear yet another criticism of what they're trying to do. They are not opposed to new ideas provided they are consulted about them."

■ Gillian Shepherd, Secretary of State for Education, angered teachers by saying that the Prime Minister's remarks meant that tests for seven-, 11- and 14-year-olds would be simplified again despite repeated revisions over the last seven years.

"We are not just talking about simplifying scores but about simplifying tests," he said. "We would then be able to give parents a mark for their children that they would easily understand." Pupils' marks in national tests are already available to parents on request.

Government advisers are also piloting a scheme where parents of seven-year-olds are told how their child has performed in reading in relation to their age.

£20m cost of illiteracy, page 15

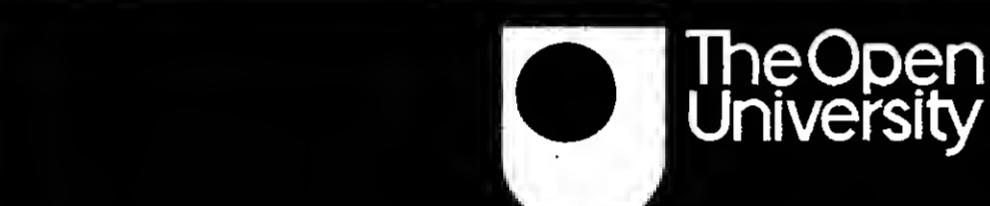
Terry Turbin, acting curator of the Fairground Museum collection, with two of the exhibits from the collection - which was due to be opened to the public in a purpose-built museum at Northampton - whose future is in jeopardy after a failed

bidding for lottery cash, writes Stephen Goodwin. While major museums and galleries were lapping up a £137m pay-out last week, the founders of the Fairground Heritage Trust were contemplating the end of a dream and the break-up of a priceless

collection of richly decorated roundabouts and shows. If the Trust cannot raise £225,000 by the end of April, its 10-year drive for a National Fairground Museum will be over.

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Fairground attractions may be kept under wraps



Level 1 Maths, Science or Technology courses.

Satisfy your curiosity, develop your career potential... and work towards a BSc degree.

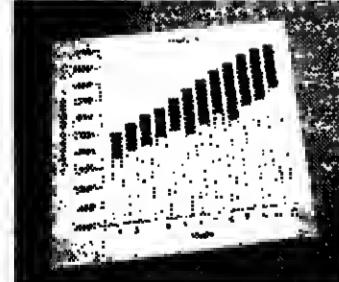
In the space of two generations, the world has been transformed. Communications, transport, medicine, our homes and workplaces would be unrecognisable to our great grandparents.

The Open University Level 1 courses in science, technology or mathematics help you to understand the forces that shape our lives; and offer a foundation of knowledge that is valuable in many careers.

On completion, all these courses can count towards a BSc.

Choose science, technology or mathematics

The Level 1 science course *Discovering science* introduces the study of biology, chemistry, Earth sciences and physics. You'll cover a range of contemporary science issues including genetic engineering, global warming, biodiversity, and the search for life in other parts of the Universe.



Our Level 1 technology course, *Living with technology*, examines the technologies we take for granted, from electricity generation and manufactured goods to the information superhighway. It examines how technologists take decisions and the benefits and costs of progress. The course also gives a sound introduction to the use of computers.

The Level 1 mathematics courses show you how to investigate and answer mathematical questions about a wide variety of natural and man-made phenomena. There is a choice of starting points, and the courses

will build up your confidence to go on to further study in maths, statistics and computing.

Through OU supported open learning

Our proven method of teaching allows you to study wherever you live and in your own time. So you can build your study around the needs of your career and family.

You're supported by a personal tutor, who gives regular tutorials and marks assignments which are returned to you. Whenever you

need help and advice - or simply a word of encouragement - your tutor is a phone call away.

There are over 300 study centres, and 13 Regional Centres throughout the UK. Here you can meet your tutor, attend group tutorials, or join your local self-help study group.

Multimedia learning

All these Level 1 courses use a variety of learning materials. There are illustrated texts which have been specially written for individual study, radio and television programmes, audio and video cassettes, produced in association with the BBC.

Both science and technology Level 1 courses offer the opportunity to attend a week-long residential school.

Send for your free prospectus on 'Courses, Diplomas and BA/BSc Degrees' NOW.

To: The Open University, PO Box 625, Milton Keynes MK1 1TY.

Please send my copy of Courses, Diplomas and BA/BSc Degrees.

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Computer software is used extensively to teach particular topics and help test your understanding. If you do not have a computer, we operate a hire scheme for new students and provide materials to get you started.

Develops career and personal skills

We appreciate that you may not have studied for some time. Our unique Level 1 courses are designed to help you develop good study habits. For example, how to organise your time, read effectively, take notes, think analytically, and develop your arguments.

Once learned these skills are valuable in a range of work and social activities.

'Excellent' courses and materials

Open University study is not a soft option. The academic rigour of our qualifications is equal to that of any other university in the UK.

We are in the small group of universities rated as 'excellent' in most subjects by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and many leading businesses sponsor OU students. These include British Airways, Royal Mail, Whitbread, Standard Life, Lucas, Hewlett-Packard and IBM.

To be eligible, you should be 18 or over and resident in the European Union.

No previous qualifications are required. For your free prospectus, use the coupon or call our Hotline NOW.

Mr Smith also reaffirmed his plans to oblige GPs to join together in "locality groups", which would jointly commission services and run their budgets collectively.



Sir Edward Heath: Completely at odds with Conservative Party

openly, to appeal to their people above the heads of their governments and politicians.

"What would we say if somebody came to this country and said we will ignore your politicians, your government, and your Parliament and just listen to what I have got to say? It would not go down very well."

His remarks provoked a backlash from Tory Euro-sceptics. John Carlisle, MP for Little North, said of Sir Edward: "He is probably the best example of New Labour that there is and the best reason why people should ignore what he has got to say."

"As an unashamed socialist, he is causing enormous damage to himself personally, and partly to his party. The sooner he goes, the better."

Another leading Euro-sceptic

tic, Bill Cash, said: "Sir Edward Heath is completely at odds with the Conservative Party on its most important policies, which totally contradicts his assertive that it is we, the Euro-realists, who are to the wrong."

Teresa Gorman, MP for Brierley, who lost the whip over her Euro-sceptic rebellions, said the Chief Whip should discipline the former prime minister. "I was carpeted for introducing a Referendum Bill, so he should be carpeted, too, for what he has said," she said.

"It is people like Sir Edward, with his bitter and twisted spite, who could cost the Tories the election, not me."

"Who is Sir Edward going to join the Labour Party and have done with it?"

"He has never really been a Conservative at all. His views have always been socialist, in so far as he has political views. Now that he is reaching his dotage, it is all coming out."

"How can he stand as a Conservative at this election when he is putting forward straight Labour policies?"

A senior Tory party source said: "One wonders what government policy he has supported these days." And the former Treasury minister David Heathcoat-Amory said: "I detect a note of desperation... because he has lost the argument about so many of his beliefs. He is beginning to lash out against the majority of the party."

Heath condemned as a socialist by Tory Euro-sceptics

Colin Brown

Chief Political Correspondent

Sir Edward Heath, the former Conservative prime minister, yesterday was urged to join New Labour by furious Tory Euro-sceptic MPs yesterday after endorsing Tony Blair's programme for the social chapter, the minimum wage, and a Scottish parliament.

The remarks by Sir Edward, 80, who is standing for the Tories in Old Bedeley and Sidcup at the general election, threatened to undermine a central theme of the election attack by Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, that Labour would import the policies that had increased unemployment in Germany and France. John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, said Sir Edward had "demolished his own party's negative election campaign".

Sir Edward rejected John Major's claims that the social chapter could cost 500,000 jobs and said the purpose of the minimum wage was to avoid sweat labour "quite rightly so". On the Scottish parliament, he said:

"There is no danger to the Union of the United Kingdom, come whatsoever." The former Tory leader also criticised Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's controversial tour of EU member states. "I wish that the Foreign Secretary had gone on a tour of European countries, trying as he said to

get out of his difficulties."

"As an unashamed socialist, he is causing enormous damage to himself personally, and partly to his party. The sooner he goes, the better."

Another leading Euro-sceptic

Mr Smith also reaffirmed his plans to oblige GPs to join together in "locality groups", which would jointly commission services and run their budgets collectively.

The scheme would be up and running within three years of Labour taking power and is aimed at ending what Labour sees as a two-tier service, with GP fundholders' patients enjoying some advantages over non-fundholding GPs' patients.

"What has happened is that some GPs are becoming fundholders and other GPs are not becoming fundholders. Patients with the same conditions, living in the same area, are being treated in different ways. There is a two-tier health service being created by this," he said.

However, Mr Smith insisted that if GP fundholders in the group wanted to remain running their own budgets, they could do so, but only if a majority of the other practices in the local area agreed.

Mr Smith said that although some of his proposals would not require changes in the law, he hoped those that did could be legislated for in Mr Blair's first Queen's Speech.

The shadow Health secretary was sanguine about the fact that in the first year of a Labour government he would not get more money for health spending than the figure which has already been spelled out by the Conservative Chancellor Kenneth Clarke for 1997-98.

He said: "I have to operate within the departmental budget for the whole of the first year and I have to be able to demonstrate that what we're doing is spending that money well and wisely and cutting down on waste - only then could I even dream of giving to Cabinet and arguing for more resources."

However, Mr Smith predicted that by tackling unemployment, funds could be freed up for spending to areas such as health in a Labour government's second year.

NHS placemen face axe under Smith

Labour's health spokesman, Chris Smith, hinted strongly yesterday that he would end the practice of political appointments to NHS trust boards by advertising for candidates.

The Secretary of State for Health currently decides who chairs such quangos. But Mr Smith said he was "looking seriously" at such posts being advertised.

Labour has tried to ease fears that it would sweep away some Tory sympathisers on trust boards and replace them with its own placemen.

Yesterday, speaking on LWT's *Jonathan Dimbleby* programme, Mr Smith said: "We do need seriously to look at the appointments to the boards of these trusts because at the moment they are not particularly representative of the communities that they serve."

"Many of the early appointments particularly that were made to the trust boards were made on partisan grounds by Conservative ministers."

kept under wrap

Welcome to the new Midland Bank

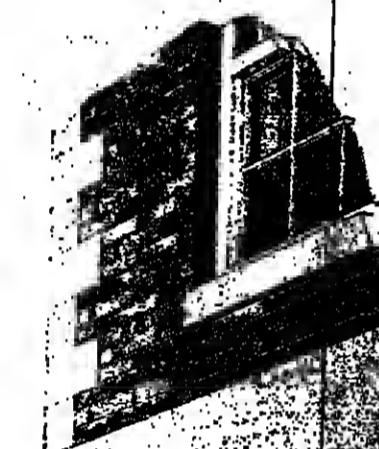
You'll notice that we're introducing a smart new corporate identity. But the changes at Midland are more than superficial. We've taken a series of steps to ensure our customers receive the highest possible level of service. Please take the time to look around:

New Corporate Identity

The old 'Griffin' is being replaced by the new 'hexagon' symbol, recognising our membership of the HSBC Group, one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations. Eventually the new symbol will appear on everything from our stationery to your cheque books.

New Products

Like the highly-acclaimed Midland Bank Account which has a no-fee overdraft and £50 buffer zone.



New Interiors

All our branches have been refurbished, making them more modern, comfortable and, we hope, more attractive environments.

Putting Customers First

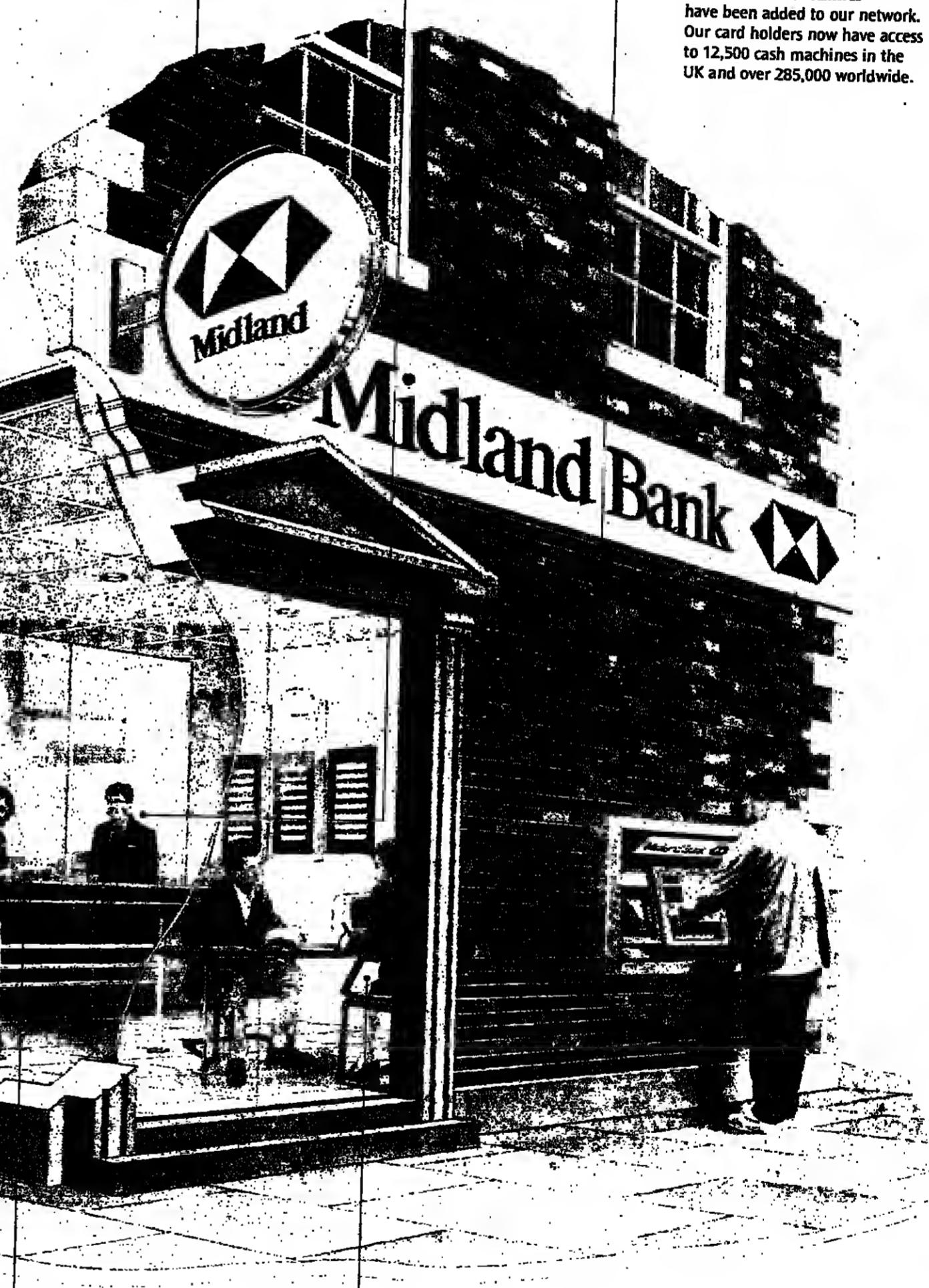
and as a result our customer satisfaction is at an all-time high.

Experienced Managers

have been put back into branches where our customers need them most. Now 90% of loan decisions can be made on the spot.

500 New Cash Machines

have been added to our network. Our card holders now have access to 12,500 cash machines in the UK and over 285,000 worldwide.



Financial Planning Managers

Our team of professionally-qualified Financial Planning Managers can offer expert financial advice across our full range of home finance, life assurance and investment products.

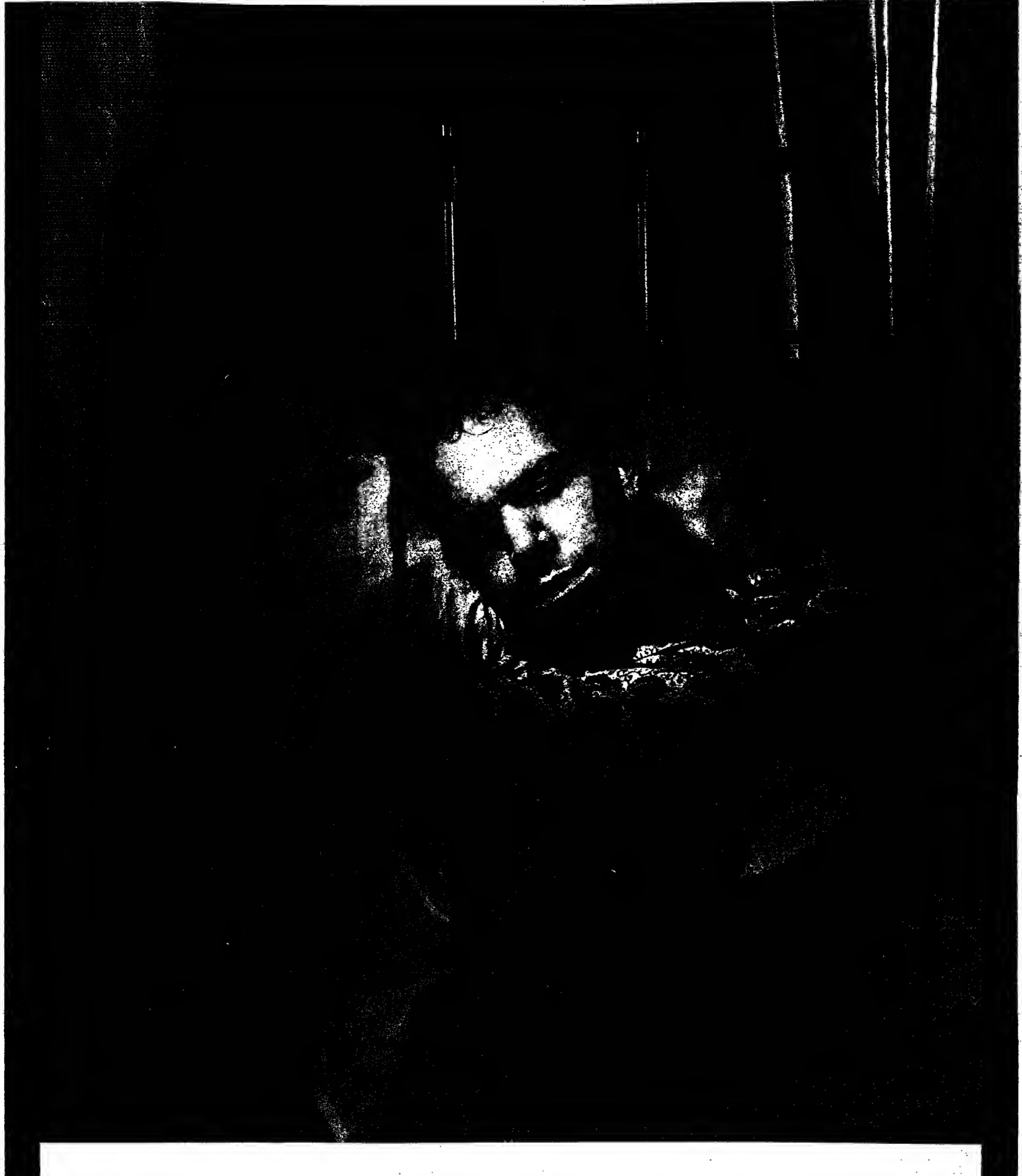
Better Trained People

In the last year all our 45,000 staff have undergone a comprehensive training programme to improve their customer service skills.



Midland
The Listening Bank

Member HSBC Group



THIS MAN HAS SOMETHING EXTREMELY RARE. A HOSPITAL BED.

He's one of the lucky ones. Every week over a thousand NHS operations are cancelled for want of a hospital bed. 43,000 beds have been lost since 1990. There are 50,000 fewer nurses than in 1990. No wonder so many people have been waiting over a year and a half for treatment. This government is running our National Health Service into the ground. Meanwhile private hospital beds have increased by 66%. If all this makes you sick, save your anger for polling day.

UNISON
the public service union

1000150

Post for by the Union General Election

Gun lobby takes protest to the streets of London



Banner-waving gun enthusiasts wading through central London yesterday to protest against anti-gun laws planned in the wake of the Dunblane tragedy. The demonstration, organised by the Sportsman's Association, attracted more than

12,000 hunting and shooting fans from around the United Kingdom. As well as showing opposition to the Firearms Bill, by marching from Speaker's Corner to Trafalgar Square, they spoke of possibly fielding candidates in the general election.

Their spokesman, Michael Yardley, said the rally – the third since the association was founded last October – had drawn an "extraordinary" number of people, who refused "to go down quietly".

Photograph: Emma Boam

Professors take facts of cancer to schools

Ian Burrow

Schoolchildren as young as nine are to be given lessons about lung cancer to dissuade them from taking up smoking.

Scientists will begin going into classrooms next month to give young children information about the dangers of smoking.

The scientists, from the Cancer Research Campaign, will be working alongside teachers in seven British cities and the studies will form a part of the children's science lessons.

The classes are being aimed at 9- and 10-year-olds because educationalists have advised that many older children will have already started experimenting with cigarettes.

The Cancer Research Campaign will shortly meet with officials from the Department for Education to discuss the extension of the schools programme to the rest of the country next year.

The programme also educates children on the dangers of skin cancer from over-exposure to the sun and informs older schoolgirls of the importance of screening for cervical cancer.

Jean King, the CRC's head of education, said many teachers still found it awkward to talk to children about cancer.

She said: "It's still a bit of a taboo subject in schools even though one in three of us will get it at some point in our lives. Teachers are uncomfortable in case 'somebody's granny' has died from the disease."

She added: "In order to overcome such tension, the CRC scientists, who include some of Britain's leading cancer specialists, have agreed to dress in the style of 'mad professors', wearing loud kippies, ties with their white coats to attract the interest of the children. They will concentrate on dissuading the nine-year-olds from smoking by telling them how cigarettes limit their sporting abilities and make their clothes and breath smell."

The cancer education lessons are based on the Topic of Cancer programme, which was devised by a group of teachers in Barnet, north London, in conjunction with Professor Anne Charlton, an expert in cancer education based at Manchester University.

The programme aims to be

non-dictatorial, providing the young children with the facts and leaving them to make their own decisions.

Children are also given advice on how to avoid peer pressure to smoke and to realise that most lumps on the body are not cancers, but that it is important to have them seen by a doctor.

Professor Charlton said other lessons taught children important social skills in coping with cancer, including helping friends who became ill with the disease.

She said: "When a child who has had cancer comes back to school he or she can be ostracised because friends think the cancer is infectious or that the person caught the disease for doing things they should not have done."

Each year, 1,500 new cases of cancer are reported in children under the age of 15 in Britain. After heart disease, cancer remains Britain's biggest killer among adults.

Schoolchildren in Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol and Cambridge will be the first to receive the new classes.

Family of five killed in flat fire

Thomas Harding

A couple who died with their three young children in a blaze in their flat yesterday made desperate efforts to save the children's lives before they were overcome by smoke.

Shagahan and Rukshana Miah struggled through choking fumes in their second-floor flat as they tried to save their children, including a two-month-old baby girl. But they were overcome by the smoke and heat and died.

Firefighters found the body of Mr Miah, 41, in the hallway when they burst into the flat in Palmers Green, north London. Mrs Miah, 25, had managed to pick up her baby, Mary – who was born on Christmas Day – but both were found lying on the bedroom floor. The couple's eldest daughter, Mishkatath, 4, and their 17-month-old son, Shamir, were still in their bed.

The fire began shortly before 7am yesterday in their home above the Dipioli Indian restaurant where Mr Miah was a partner. Two tenants in the first-floor flat raised the alarm before smoke forced them to flee from the building.

A Fire Brigade spokesman said: "This is a terrible tragedy – it was shocking to find a family like this. A large part of the flat was destroyed. It was extremely arduous because of the smoke, fire and heat."

Tory stands up for disgruntled rank and file

Michael Streeter

Disillusioned Conservatives unite: you now have your own party, and parliamentary candidates to represent you.

The Disillusioned Conservatives (Campaign for Change), who prefer to see themselves as a "group" rather than a party, have just published their first survey of well-disillusioned Tories.

It reveals that at least 5 per cent of voters describe themselves as "DC", and are prepared to sign a statement to that effect. Their main areas of unhappiness are the party's confusions over the European Union and the single currency, law and order, the performance of ministers – including John Major – and the Tories' electoral campaigning tactics.

Now, for the first time, these disgruntled Tories have some one to vote for other than a Labour or Liberal Democrat candidate to register their protest. Phil Gott, a chartered accountant and a former constituency party chairman, is standing at the Wirral South by-election on Thursday as a Disillusioned candidate.

Mr Gott, from Milton Keynes, said yesterday: "I am a Conservative through and through and our supporters want the party to win the general election."

"But they have to start to do things differently – we do not

want five more years of the same thing."

This "same thing", as defined by the DCs, is a failure to tackle law and order properly, a lack of serious debate over the single currency and Europe, and the constant negative campaigning.

Mr Gott, 38, who has no connection with Wirral but believes he could pick up 2,500 votes, said that the Conservative Party is "dying on its feet".

He added: "The average age of a member is 63. The party needs to modernise itself and its ties to people. It needs to move forward."

The group's survey of 500 people in Leighton Buzzard produced 23 who were prepared to sign up as "disillusioned" Tories. These people would only vote Conservative again if the party showed a willingness to change.

In Wirral South, where the Tories are defending a 8,000-plus majority, Mr Gott, who helped set up DC 18 months ago, says he has found fertile ground for his ideas. "The level of support is astounding. I needed 10 electors to nominate me. Having knocked on just 22 doors I had my 10 signatures."

The DCs have not yet decided their tactics in a general election. "We will see what response we get from the electorate in Wirral South and from the Conservative Party. It's a question of wait and see."

MI5 defies the hackers to open its Internet site

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

MI5 is to join the electronic superhighway to help recruit spies and provide information about the security service.

The secret service agency is putting in elaborate security measures to stop computer hackers breaking into its new web site and using it to spread false information.

MI5's move into the Internet, which is due to take place by the summer, is part of the service's attempt to promote its policy of greater openness.

Although at first, the site is not expected to be open to inquiries from the public, a postal address will be published. Later, the agency will consider opening an e-mail address for people around the world to make contact. This could be a useful source of intelligence and anonymous tip-offs.

The ease with which some hackers have been able to break into sites was demonstrated to devastating and embarrassing effect in December when the Labour Party's world-wide web site was attacked. An American computer "geek" broke into the site and changed the title "Road to the Manifesto" to "Road to Nowhere". He also tinkered with links to other web sites so

they read: "The Labour Party sex shop," and transferred visitors to pages carrying pornography. Later Mr Blair's *Spitting Image* effigy was added under the banner "Hacked Labour: Same Politicians, Same Lies."

On a more serious note,

hackers on the Internet broke into US Defense Department computers more than 160,000 times in 1995. Investigators from the Congress discovered.

Sinn Fein supporters at the University of Texas have also been accused of publishing a terrorist "crisis sheet" on the Internet giving detailed information about alleged MI5 installations and military bases in Northern Ireland.

The very nature of the Internet – an open system without a governing body – encourages hacking. However, a number of software security packages called "firewalls" and other techniques for keeping out unwanted visitors have been developed.

During the past few years, MI5 has raised its public profile by advertising for potential recruits and publishing an annual report, which gives a wide range of details about the service. Other security agencies such as MI6 have yet to decide whether to follow suit.

5.99%
(6.4% APR)
FROZEN UNTIL
APRIL 1999

(Now there's a nice warm feeling!)

There's a simple way of controlling your costs. Abbey National has on offer a range of competitively priced fixed rate mortgages that enable you to peg your mortgage outgoings.

The above rate is available to all customers moving home including first time buyers. Please call 0800 100 800 and quote reference A450B/13, or call into your local branch to find out about other fixed rates available.

ABBEY
NATIONAL®

http://www.abbeynational.co.uk



MORTGAGES

YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT.

Lines are open Monday to Friday 8am to 9pm and Saturday 8am to 4pm. To assist us in improving our service we may record or monitor calls. Rates correct at time of going to press. For the above Fixed Rate there is a £150 non-refundable booking fee and completion must take place by 31.7.97. The rate is fixed until 30.4.2002. As a condition of this Fixed Rate, the mortgage must remain at the standard variable rate that will apply after the fixed period, or make a capital repayment (except normal monthly repayments on a repayment mortgage) on or before 30.4.2002, a charge of 180 days grace interest at the fixed rate on the amount repaid or transferred will be payable. All offers are subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. Typical example for a Fixed Rate of 5.99% (6.4% APR) until 30.4.99, a couple (male and female), non smokers, aged 29, applying for an endowment mortgage of £40,000 on a purchase price of £47,105 secured over 25 years. 300 monthly endowment premiums of £58.22. Total amount payable £102,207.99 includes £180 booking fee, £65 deeds handling fee (charged on redemption), £117.50 legal fees, £12.79 accrued interest assuming completion on 31.7.97. All APR's are typical and variable and based on an endowment mortgage. Secured loans and mortgages require a charge on the property and in the case of an endowment mortgage an endowment/life policy for the amount of the advance and a charge over the policy. All loans subject to status and valuation. Loans not available to persons under 18 years of age. We require the property to be insured. If you do not insure through Abbey National we reserve the right to charge an administration fee of £25. A High Lender to Value Fee is required if the loan exceeds 75% of the property's valuation (with certain cases the purchase price, whichever is lower). Written quotations are available on request. Abbey National plc, which is regulated by the Personal Investments Authority, only sells its own life assurance, pension and unit trust products. Abbey National and the Umbrella Couple symbol are trademarks of Abbey National plc, Abbey House, Baker Street, London NW1 6XL, United Kingdom.

news

Blair plans European affairs department

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The Labour Party is considering creating a special government department to deal with Europe in an effort to show that, in government, it will be strong in its negotiations with its European partners.

The main purpose of the department would be to liaise and

negotiate with Brussels, ensuring that Britain has a much better relationship with the European Union than the present government. The minister in charge would be expected to play a major role in all Britain's dealings with Europe.

The Foreign Office which is responsible currently for dealing with the EU has frequently been criticised for failing to

alert ministers to what is happening in Brussels and for its poor negotiation skills. A new set-up, with many new civil servants, would also help remove the resentment felt in Brussels about the British attitude towards the EU.

The plan for a department of European affairs is currently being worked on in Tony Blair's office by his chief-of-

staff, Joaathan Powell. While there is a strong logic to the plan, it is bound to be controversial because it will split the Foreign Office and make the job of Foreign Secretary, earmarked for Robin Cook, the main standard-bearer for the Left, much less important than in the current set-up. A senior Labour source said: "They are thinking about it, but they might

well be wise to leave well alone. Robin, who has been doing all the preparatory work on the Inter-Governmental Conference [due to start at the end of May] would be furious if the role is taken away from him." Without Europe and with the Cold War now ended, the job of Foreign Secretary would be little more than a "glorified standard-bearer", the source added.

Any radical shake-up would be resisted within Whitehall, especially if it involved the partial dismemberment of the prestigious Foreign Office. However, one civil service source said: "The FO really deserves to be shaken up. It has performed really badly on the Europe issue and does not know how to deal with Brussels which treats them with contempt."

The idea also has unfortunate associations with the ill-fated department of economic affairs which was created in 1964 as an attempt to develop economic policy away from the constraints of the treasury but never succeeded in posing a serious challenge and it was eventually scrapped.

However, the advantage for Mr Blair is that it would create

an extra key Cabinet post with no present shadow incumbent and therefore it could be offered to his loyal campaign manager and strategist, Peter Mandelson, the MP for Hartlepool.

Another possible candidate is George Robertson, the current shadow Scottish secretary, who is thought to have done the Europe job well before taking up his current post.

Nature quango denies paying off laird

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

A Highland laird whose family estate will receive £129,000 from the taxpayer for out clearing precious woodlands is to leave the board of the Government's nature adviser, Scottish Natural Heritage, which agreed the payment.

Lord Strathnaver risks gaining the coterie of his ancestor, the first Duke of Sutherland, an architect of the Highland Clearances, over the compensation deal with SNH.

The trustees of the Sutherland Estates will receive a one-off payment of £129,000 for a 100-year management agreement covering 2,600 acres of forest, heath, saltmarsh and sand dunes by Loch Fleet in the far north-west of Scotland.

The crucial part of the agreement covers 100 acres of Balblair Woods which contains the only genetically viable colony of one-flowered wintergreen and other rare plants and lichen.

Magnus Magnusson, the quizzmaster chairman of SNH, said the board had nothing to be ashamed of: "Lord Strathnaver is not in any way holding the nation to ransom."

The payment represents the difference between the amount the estate could realise by cutting the timber in a commercial operation and managing it for nature conservation. Some of



Under fire: Lord Strathnaver outside his ancestral home, Dunrobin Castle. His family estate is to receive £129,000 to preserve 2,600 acres of land

Photograph: Ian Jolly

the Scots pines will still be felled and the revenue shared between SNH and the estate.

Labour MPs with an interest in land reform condemned the

arrangement. The frontbencher Brian Wilson said legislation permitting payments to landowners for not carrying out threatened damage was "bizarre

and ripe for review." Calum MacDonald, MP for the Western Isles, wrote earlier this month to SNH calling for Lord Strathnaver's resignation. "It

was untenable for somebody sitting on the SNH board, and presumably describing himself as a conservationist, to be applying for compensation."

"The politics of all this has overtaken the facts," said an SNH spokesman. "We are not paying money just to stop trees being cut down. There is the bonus of a 2,600-acre nature reserve – open to the public – which is going to be a spectacular place for scientists and naturalists."

Absentee rate among MPs on the increase

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

On the eve of a general election in which MPs will be seeking to persuade the voters that they are worth every penny of their £43,000 backbench pay, the Commons has published work records showing that absentee rates are rising.

While the Chamber of the House is the main forum for Commons debate, the detailed examination of legislation is supposed to be carried out in standing committees – mostly meeting away from the public gaze.

Commons records show that in the one-year session ending last October, 60 Bills were enacted, and 39 of them were considered in 201 sittings of standing committees, on which 536 of Westminster's 647 politically-active Members were asked to serve.

Absentee records show that in that session, 1995-96, the absentee rate was 23.5 per cent, up from 17.5 per cent in 1992-93, the first session after the last election. In 1994-95, the absentee rate was 21.5 per cent.

Those figures disguise a variety of performances by individual Members. Some refuse to serve at all on standing committees; others allow their names to be put forward, and do not attend; others are most assiduous, logging record at-

tendances on standing committees, and on the complementary select committees that monitor the work of Whitehall departments.

Commons workhorses for 1995-96 include:

■Matthew Banks (C Southport), who attended 57 out of 62 standing committee meetings

■John Whittingdale (C Colchester S and Maldon), who went to 50 out of 52 standing committee sittings, and 28 out of 40 sessions of the Health Select Committee.

Colchester appears to be a well-served city. Mr Whittingdale also went to three out of four sessions of the extremely mundane Committee on Consolidation of Legislation – which managed an absentee rate of almost 70 per cent in 1995-96.

Other high rates of absenteeism were registered for the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, which vets delegated legislation – 55.7 per cent – and European legislation, one of the most important committees at Westminster, which had an absentee rate of 43 per cent, up from 38 per cent in the year before. For the year as a whole, the Commons sat for just 146 days – 13 days less than the previous year. The average length of a day's sitting was 8 hours 45 minutes.

■Sessional Returns 1995-96, Commons paper 164. Stationery Office: £17.10.

He praises the Queen as the "world's finest head of state", but criticises the monarchy for "failed marriages, expensive royal yachts, and outdated traditions". And citizens should have the "dignity" of choosing their own head of state – either an elected president, or a ruler from within the ranks of the Royal Family.

His call is balanced in the magazine by a defence of the monarchy from the Rev Charles Robertsoo, who argues that the monarchy works at least as well as any other system and has a "sacramental" quality.

The Church of Scotland's main concern with constitutional matters over the past 50 years have centred on the way Scotland is governed.

Last year one member of its ruling general assembly objected to the use of the term "loyal subjects" in a formal letter to the Queen.

Dr Elliot said yesterday: "In Scotland we are used to questioning the constitutional framework that we are in. While for a lot of people that has been concerned with the government of Scotland itself, increasingly we are looking at the governor of the UK as a whole."

"So the wider question of the constitution, a Bill of Rights and other matters, is becoming more of an issue in Scotland."

£39
anywhere any car

gives you the reassurance of RAC
Whenever you travel. Even if
a passenger in someone else's car.
2% of cars on the spot. If we can't
get you going, we'll tow you to a nearby
garage, free of charge. Callouts and our
parts are free too – you only pay for parts.

You can tailor your cover to meet your
needs – with Joint and Family cover, plus
our 'At Home' and 'Recovery' services.
A year's worry-free driving from just £39.
Anywhere, any car. Call us today to find
out more.

0800 029 029

join us

RAC

Interact on the Internet. <http://www.rac.co.uk>

Please quote code SS2476 when you phone

FREE RAC UK ROAD ATLAS
WHEN YOU JOIN US

YES – I want to join the RAC. Please tell me how I can join from just £39*.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Send to: RAC Rescue, FREEPOST, Bristol BS8 7AU. (No stamp needed.) *Rescue costs £39 if you pay by Continuous Credit Card Authority or Direct Debit. Cash enrolment price is £44 and discount applies to your first year membership only. All prices include an enrolment fee. Phone lines open Monday-Friday 8am-8pm, Saturday 9am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. ST0009/SS2476/3

DAILY POEM

Hotel at the Bottom of the Night

By David Hartnett

In a hotel at the bottom of the night
She stands by the bed, naked, hands on hips
While, knees jack-knife to chin, the sheet stretched tight,
He stands at nothing. Next door a shower-rose drips.

Who are they? What will they do or speak of next?
And why to their alien fears and tedium
Have all your thoughts so brutally been annexed?
From floors below a coffee odour comes.

Sill there at dawn (you checked out hours before)
They part; for her, drawn blinds, the old migraine:
For him, the lakeside walk, the cafe door
Framing a city smeared with wind and rain.

This poem comes from *At The Wood's Edge*, which is David Hartnett's fourth collection. It is published by Cape at £7.

NEVER MIND BT'S LATEST ROUND OF PRICE CUTS.

WE'RE STILL 20% CHEAPER



So they're at it again. Another round of price cuts. Oh dear, sorry to spoil the party BT, but we're still at least 20% cheaper for international calls weekday evenings and all weekend.

For details FreeCall 0500 500 366.

Mercury SmartCall

You don't have to be a genius to see how much you'll save.

Print and service will resume to be resume on 19th February 1997, excepted
apart 077 hours for international calls of 5 minutes or more. Special rates available and may
vary at service levels. Services available for a quarterly fee of £175 for £125

partner

Editor
calls
elect
head
staff

chinese succession: Would-be paramount leader woos military as Peking rations public grief

Jiang given a boost by the army big guns

Teresa Poole
Peking

"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," said Chairman Mao, and to this day a top Chinese leader must be certain he has the support of the military. So a pledge of allegiance this weekend to President Jiang Zemin by the main branches of the armed forces was a message which China's current leader must hope is more than just a polite form of words.

The military has plenty of reasons these days for wanting a stable China, not least their own sprawling business and commercial empire, which encompasses everything from Basin-Robbins icecream, five-star hotels and futures trading to civilian nuclear technology, and more.

More than 10,000 enterprises in China are owned or linked to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the men in green have a huge financial stake in continued economic reform and political stability. Around 70 per cent of the military's industrial output is now civilian products, and the PLA knows any overt power struggle in the upper echelons of the party, or a lack of consensus about reform, would be bad for business.

All of which is good news for Mr Jiang, the Chinese president and Communist Party leader, who has since 1990 been head of the armed forces, and who hopes to be China's new paramount leader, following the death of Deng Xiaoping last week. Lacking any military credentials of his own, he knows he cannot take for granted the loyalty of the generals. Unlike Mr Deng, who was an authentic revolutionary hero and veteran of the Long March, Mr Jiang has had to work hard to build his support in the PLA. During the long years of Mr Deng's decline,



Jiang: Assiduously attended parades and inspections

Mr Jiang assiduously attended troop inspections, congratulating "model" soldiers, and chairing high-level military meetings. The President has also promoted his own chosen generals, including all seven military region commanders.

"The army will be one of the principal decision-makers in any argument about who is in charge," said a Western military attaché in Peking. "Whatever leadership comes [after Deng] must at least have the acquiescence of the PLA. They will not dictate, but they will say: 'We'll have influence at the highest levels. So help us modernise, increase our defence budget, listen to our advice.' And they will be listened to."

In a statement released at the

weekend, the military pledged their support for Mr Jiang, who since 1993 has held all three top state, party and army positions. The leaders of the 3 million-strong People's Liberation Army (PLA) "vowed to obey the leadership of the Communist Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission (CMC) in a steadfast way and to ensure the army's unity," the official Xinhua news agency announced.

Mr Jiang must hope they mean what they say. In late 1992, Mr Deng moved swiftly against the "Yang family clique" in the PLA for allegedly plotting with other army leaders for the aftermath of his death. Yang Shangkun lost his job as president, and his half-brother Yang Boqing was removed from the CMC. Personnel changes swept through the armed forces, with professional soldiers and military technocrats promoted in favour of anyone with political ambitions. But Mr Yang, 39, a former Red Army revolutionary, is still fit, and popular with the top brass, and may emerge as one of the back-room power-brokers in any jockeying for position.

In Chinese political life, the identities of the party and the military still overlap at all levels. To keep defence chiefs content, the younger generation of Chinese leaders has presided over a doubling in real terms of the official defence budget during the past seven years, despite no obvious external threats. The most visible demonstration of general's impact on policy was seen last year, when China held big missile and military manoeuvres in the Taiwan Strait in the run-up to the island's presidential elections. Mr Jiang was forced to give in to the hawks after the military top brass had accused him of being too soft-handed.

Teresa Poole
Peking

Amid heavy security, about 100 people, mostly Communist Party veterans, will this morning bow before the flag-shrouded corpse of Deng Xiaoping, before his body is whisked from a military hospital in Peking to the Babaoshan (Eight Treasure Mountain) cemetery for a private cremation ceremony. Plainclothes and uniformed police presence is getting stronger every day, ahead of an

event which the authorities know will be watched by millions around the world. Tiananmen Square and the university district, where students today return to classes after the Chinese New Year holiday, are under a heavy security blanket.

Deng's ashes are to be placed in the Great Hall of the People from where, tomorrow morning, a 10,000-strong memorial service will be broadcast to the nation. The Chinese government, determined to allow no possibility of mishaps in the carefully

leaves China before the memorial service tomorrow. Ms Albright will be the first major foreign dignitary to meet President Jiang Zemin since Deng died last week.

The government has acted swiftly to prevent any private expressions of grief, which it feared might get out of hand.

At Peking University over the weekend, returning students seemed more concerned about their classes than Deng's funeral arrangements. In the economics department, a 25-year-old

postgraduate said: "He was a great man who created a new era. I feel very sad. Now I only want to study hard."

In the Biological Chemistry department, a 22-year-old student said: "I love Deng's pragmatic spirit. I came from a poor village in Yunnan province. Right now I only want to find a job, remain in Peking, save money, and go to America to study. Even if in the future I work for a foreign company, I can always find ways to serve China."

Deng's heirs take their last bow

Photograph: AP

Homage to a leader: An old man reading some of the official tributes in China's newspapers to Deng Xiaoping

North Korea in denial as cadres jostle for power

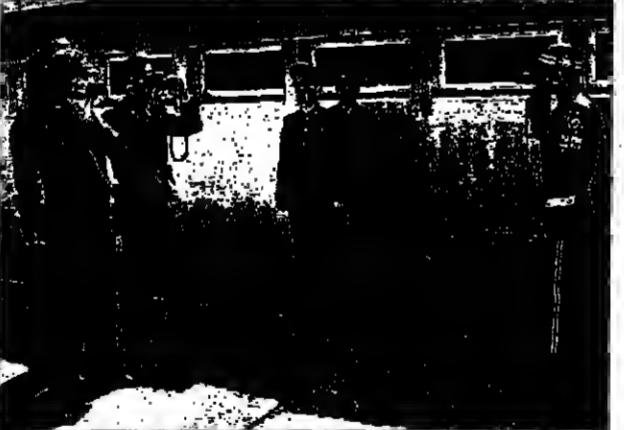
Pyongyang's politically bankrupt élite is desperately hanging on as rumours of economic crisis, famine and desertion spread

Richard Lloyd Parry
Seoul

North Korean domestic politics, for the last half-century at least, has been notably lacking in colourful incidents and upsets. For the first 49 years of its history, until his death in 1994, the country was ruled by just one man – the revered and ruthless "Great Leader", Kim Il Sung. He was immediately succeeded by his son, Kim Jong Il – but three years later, the "Dear Leader" has still not taken on the paramount titles of president and chairman of the Central People's Committee.

Outside their own country, the legions of auxiliary marshals, vice-presidents and party secretaries are almost completely unknown: like Cold War communist leaders all over the world, North Korea's cadres are long-serving, faceless and old. In the absence of any hard information from the North, the best that the outside world has been able to do is read the tea-leaves. In Seoul and Tokyo, a small industry of radio eavesdroppers, translators and analysts devote itself to monitoring the incremental changes in the country's baffling array of committees, councils and ministries.

In the past, there have been as many different theories as there are North Korea-watchers, but these days they are unanimous in the last fort-



Great divide: Border guards from North and South Korea stand across from each other at Panmunjom. Photograph: Ahn Young Joon

nite, dramatic changes have been taking place in Pyongyang. They began, and may have been triggered by, the attempted defection in China of a senior member of the Workers' Party, a 74-year-old scholar, Hwang Jang Yop. Holed up in South Korea's consulate in Peking, Mr Hwang represents the first living evidence that, for all its propaganda, discontent with the state of things in North Korea extends to the highest reaches of its leadership.

And in the last three days, that leadership appears to have undergone its biggest reshuffle in years. On Friday, in a message of condolence for the death of the Chinese leader Deng Xi-

ming, it emerged that the North Korean prime minister, 66-year-old Kang Song San, had been replaced by an acting premier.

On the same day, the 78-year-old defence minister, Choe Kwang, was reported to have died of a heart attack. The list of members of Mr Choe's final committee – a classic guide to who is top of the pops in the North Korean hierarchy – suggested that 30 of the 83 most senior jobs have recently changed hands.

What all this means is another matter. Given the atmosphere of intrigue surrounding North Korea, it is tempting to suspect the worst – that, faced with a worsening economic crisis, im-

A neck injury can mean months of visits to a specialist for treatment. And, if you're not adequately covered, it can also mean months of expensive bills.

Some policies don't cover treatments like osteopathy and chiropractic. And, incredibly, some don't give you full cover for basics like specialist consultations and surgeons' fees.

Primedcare, from Prime Health offers all this cover and much more – at a price that's equivalent to some companies' budget schemes. On top of which, we're



"What's really painful is not being covered by my health insurance."

one of the few to offer a no-claims discount of up to 50%.

Why not call us to see how your policy compares to Primedcare?

Primedcare

A member of the Standard Life Group

Call 0800 77 99 55 now,
or fill in the coupon for a no-obligation quote.

Title	First name	Surname
Address		
Postcode		
Phone (inc STD code) Day Evening		
Date of birth of the oldest person requiring cover		
Cover required: Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Family <input type="checkbox"/> Single parent family <input type="checkbox"/>		
Reserv'd date of current insurance (if applicable)		
If you'd prefer a representative to visit, please tick box <input type="checkbox"/>		
Please post to (no stamp required) Prime Health Limited, FREEPOST, B12 192, Guildford, GU1 4PZ, http://www.primedcare.co.uk		
MO4 18 NG		

Toothless crocodile bites keeper

Sydney (AP) — A game handler at a tourist wildlife park survived being bitten by a 1/4 ton crocodile, saying "I'm bloody glad he's got no teeth!" as she was pulled from its jaws.

Karla Bredl, 21, suffered a broken left thigh and deep lacerations in the attack last Friday, which happened moments after she fed a saltwater crocodile named Solomon in front of tourists.

Ms Bredl was still heavily sedated and said to be in a serious condition yesterday at the Mackay Base Hospital, which is just south of the Barefoot Bushman's Wildlife Park at Camonvale near the Whitsunday Islands in north-east Australia, where the attack happened.

Her uncle, Rob Bredl, told the *Sunday Telegraph* newspaper in Sydney that when the attack

came, "Karla's dad, Joe, jumped on the croc's back and stuck his thumbs in its eyes to make it let go. As they pulled her out, she said: 'I'm bloody glad he's got no teeth!'

"Just before it happened, she was joking with the crowd. She said, 'If I ever get grabbed, I'd rather it be this one, because he's got no teeth from fighting other crocs.' Then she slipped, and it was on her," he said.

"In the wild, they just smash their jaws together and they can easily break a bullock's leg," Mr Bredl said.

international

French élite march for immigrants

John Lichfield
Paris

The figures tell the story. More than 100,000 people (not 50,000 as the police begrudgingly insisted) marched through Paris at the weekend to protest against a proposed new law to control illegal immigration.

Similar demonstrations in the provinces, however, attracted only small crowds: 2,000 in Toulouse, 1,000 in Strasbourg, 300 in Marseilles. The revolt against the new law – and by proxy, the far right – has been led by prominent intellectuals and artists and seems to be disproportionately a Parisian affair.

According to the polls, more than 60 per cent of French people support the new immigration Bill, which is due to be finalised in the National Assembly tomorrow. Paradoxically, the same polls suggest that just over 50 per cent of French people support the scores of petitions of protest against the Bill, which led to Saturday's march.

The arithmetic is not necessarily as strange as it sounds: it has been clear from the beginning that the real target of the protest is Jean-Marie Le Pen's xenophobic Front National, following its electoral victory in Vaucluse, near Marseilles. This was evident from the banners and placards on Saturday, divided more or less equally between attacks on Jean-Louis Debré, the interior minister who drafted the proposed law, and attacks on the FN.

The march began at the Gare de l'Est, as a deliberate reference to Jews deported from that station during the Second World War. In an atmosphere of solemn carnival the parade filled the whole of the Boulevard de Magenta – at least one mile long – by the time the last marchers left the stadioo square.

The protesters were mostly under 50; mostly, but not all, smartly dressed; mostly, but not all, white; mostly, but not all, lefist in their politics. Although some of the most fa-

mous partisans (Catherine Deneuve; Isabelle Huppert) were nowhere to be seen, the marchers did include the cinema director Bertrand Tavernier, the wife of the late president, Danielle Mitterrand, the former Socialist prime minister, Laurent Fabius, and the Communist Party leader, Robert Hue.

"Nous sommes tous, tous des immigrants" (We are all immigrants), the marchers chanted. According to a recent demographical survey, this is not a huge exaggeration. Something like 20 per cent of the French population is descended from immigrants who have arrived in the last 70 years. "What of Joyce, Wilde, Hemingway?" asked one placard, referring to famous – but certainly not illegal – literary immigrants to France.

The apparent confusion between legal and illegal immigration runs throughout the protest against the Debré law. The protest leaders argue that the centre-right government of Alain Juppé – and the whole of French politics – have become infected by Le Pen's ideas. They have seized on the law, months after it was first promulgated, as a way of fighting back against the Front.

But the law, though clumsily drafted, is mostly a tightening of procedures against illegal immigration which have existed for years. Its most controversial clause – requiring French people sheltering certain categories of foreigners to inform the authorities when they move on – has already been dropped. Though impressive and well-intended, the protests risk alienating a section of the working and lower middle class, already vulnerable to the FN assertion that the nation's élite cares more for foreigners than the French.

■ Police yesterday cleared 400 "sans papiers" or illegal immigrants from the Saint Jean-Baptiste church in Belleville in the 19th arrondissement of Paris. The immigrants, mostly ethnic Chinese, occupied the church on Saturday to protest against the Debré law.



Sober carnival: Protesters against the illegal immigration law filling the mile-long Boulevard de Magenta in Paris on Saturday. Photograph: Jean-Christophe Kahn/Reuters

American millions stay in for 'Schindler's List'

David Usborne
New York

Sunday night on the settee was a more harrowing experience than usual yesterday for the millions of Americans who tuned to the NBC network. Instead of the usual sitcoms, they found Liam Neeson playing Oskar Schindler in Steven Spielberg's epic, *Schindler's List*.

Nor did NBC give viewers many chances to escape the film's anguish. In an unprecedented move, the two-and-a-half-hour, black-and-white depiction of the Holocaust and the true story of Schindler's quest to save 1,100 Jews was shown without commercial breaks.

The project was an unusual collaboration between the network and the Ford Motor Company. Ford sponsored the entire presentation, but ran only two advertisements for its cars: one

at each end of the film. It was also allowed to include its badge on a time-clock which appeared occasionally during the film, silently counting down the seconds of brief breaks during which viewers could make their usual urgent domestic visits.

If the audience forecasts are born out, more people will have watched the film in the United States last night than during its entire run in US cinemas after its release in 1994. Then, some 25 million paid to see the film. Last night's audience was expected to top 30 million.

Mr Spielberg, who harvested seven Oscars for the work, was part of last night's presentation, suggesting which members of the family might be better off changing channel. "While every parent should make a judgement for their own family, I do not personally believe this is a film for the very young," he said.

US alarm over Cuba protest

Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

United States military posts will go on alert today to monitor air activity around Cuba when 15 Cuban-American civilian aircraft fly towards Havana in a "protest and memorial flypast".

The light aircraft, including a Provost training jet still bearing the markings of the RAF, are commemorating the first anniversary of the shooting of two US civil aircraft by Cuban

Mig fighters.

The shootings, in which four Americans of Cuban origin were killed, led to a dramatic hardening of policy towards Cuba by US President Bill Clinton and a subsequent rift between the US and the European Union over how to treat Fidel Castro's regime.

The officials said all US radar stations in the region would be on special alert, including the Norad system aimed at pro-

tecting the US from any nuclear missile attack.

The leader of Brothers to the Rescue, Jose Basulto, who narrowly escaped a chasing Mig fighter a year ago, said Florida-based US jet fighters could have and should have taken action to prevent the shootings.

The US State Department has called on the pilots and the Cuban government not to provoke a new incident today and Cuba has said it will "take all measures necessary to prevent a violation of our airspace".

After last year's shootings, President Clinton abruptly changed tack and backed the Republican-sponsored Helms-Burton law tightening sanctions and discouraging foreign investment in Cuba. Mr Clinton urged the rest of the world to join a "chorus of democracy" against Mr Castro's communist regime.

That led to a year of conflict

with the European Union, which mostly believes doing business with Mr Castro is the best way to bring him into the democratic fold.

The dispute is now the focus of the World Trade Organisation, where the European Union has challenged the Helms-Burton law as restricting the principle of free trade. The US says that, because of Mr Castro's communist regime and its proximity to US shores, the law is an issue of US national security.

Mr Clinton's hardened stance last year was also seen as something of an election year coup which turned the votes of many Cuban-Americans, mostly Republican by tradition. Mr Clinton has twice offset EU concerns by suspending a key provision of the law which would allow US lawsuits against foreign companies doing business with Cuba in certain cases.

significant shorts

Nato tries to impress a reluctant Russia

Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian foreign minister, was last night holding talks in Brussels with Javier Solana, the Nato secretary-general, amid increasing concern about East-West disagreement on Nato enlargement.

The meeting took place following the visit to Moscow by Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of state, during which attempts to ease Russian fears about enlargement of the alliance, including the offer of a joint Russian-Nato brigade, appear to have failed. The Primakov-Solana talks were subject to a news blackout, but it was understood that Mr Solana intended to try to persuade Mr Primakov to back a deal on enlargement to ensure the plans could be finalised at the Nato summit to be held in Madrid in June.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin renewed his attack on Nato expansion, but said he thought a compromise could be reached at a summit next month with President Bill Clinton.

Two hundred die in Indian fire
About 200 people were feared killed and several injured when fire swept through shelters at a religious conference in eastern India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said. Some 5,000 people were attending the conference in Baripada town in Orissa state when the blaze tore through sheds erected for the three-day event. Reuters - New Delhi

Atlanta fears serial bomber

Investigators are searching for links between a bomb blast at a lesbian nightclub in Atlanta, Georgia, at the weekend and two other unsolved bombings, including the Centennial Olympic Park bombing last July.

An FBI official speculated that there could be a serial bomber at work, as police went on the alert once again on Saturday night after an anonymous caller telephoned a bomb threat into the city firestation that had responded to the bomb attack at the club.

Wherever you break down
in the UK we can
reach you quickly from just
£29.50* per year.

CHOOSE FROM 4 LEVELS OF COVER*	
Recovery only	£29.50
Roadside assistance	£38.00
Comprehensive	£65.50
Total protection	£89.50

*Price valid until 28/2/97

Call free now on
0800 001 353
quoting ref A3105

Green Flag
Motoring Assistance

WE LEAVE EVERYONE STANDING BUT YOU

Car hooters.



The brand new COMIC RELIEF nose.
Only available at TEXACO

Six crucial facts about the fax machine you're about to buy

1. FAXING Technology has moved on and value for money has increased. So before you buy any old fax machine, take a good look at the new plain paper F120 from Muratec. It has all the processing power your business could ever need.

2. PC CONNECTIBLE Check that your PC can work with your PC. The F120 has an optional PC interface* that lets you receive and send faxes directly to or from your PC and allows you to use your fax as a scanner to import images into your computer files.

3. PRINTING/COPYING Make sure your PC can use your fax as a printer. The F120 can be used as a 600dpi printer* or as a high quality plain paper laser copier. It makes up to 99 copies from one original with automatic or manual size reduction.

4. MULTITASKING Consider how much time can be wasted by waiting at the fax machine. The F120 scans outgoing faxes at the superfast speed of 35 pages per minute regardless of

whether it is receiving or printing incoming messages. This means you can get on with other work sooner than with ordinary fax machines.

5. MEMORY Look for a fax that incorporates a time and money saving memory. The F120 has a built in 76 page memory (upgradeable to 558 pages) which facilitates out of paper reception, broadcasting and delayed send transmissions, so you can send when tariffs are lower.

6. THE FAX SUPPLIER Buy from a company that specialises. Muratec only make faxes, so we have to be the best. We build fax machines with all these value added features built-in, not bolted on.

So before you rush out and buy an ordinary fax, send for details on the multifunctional, multitasking F120. We'll also send you a FREE Guide to Fax Facts which contains a lot more details about buying faxes.

Call 0345 626782

muratec
the fax specialists

No. 1 Stok Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4HW
Tel (01483) 302100 Fax (01483) 301900
<http://www.muratec.co.uk>

Je suis 150

Guns give way to games in West Bank divided city

Eric Silver

Hebron

Abu Shaban, a chubby, 40-year-old Palestinian in plain khaki uniform without insignia, learned 'his' soldiering in Lebanon, where he fought the invading Israelis in 1982. He learned his Hebrew in an Israeli prison in his native Gaza, where he served three years for "illegal" activity in Yasser Arafat's Patah militia.

Along the way, Abu Shaban picked up a British university law degree. He also plays a mean game of chess. His latest adversary is Private Gilad Engel, a lanky, 18-year-old Israeli national serviceman who sports the knitted skullcap associated

"The first time I played chess on the Palestinian side I was surrounded by Arabs with Kalashnikovs'

with right-wing settlers. The score so far: Palestine 2, Israel 1. "It isn't easy to beat him," concedes Abu Shaban. "He's very good, very tough."

The two chess enthusiasts are based together in a cluster of white caravans surrounded by razor wire on a bleak hilltop south of Hebron, where Israeli and Palestinian security forces have surprised a sceptical world by keeping the peace for a full month since Israeli troops withdrew from 80 per cent of this incendiary West Bank city.

Shaban is legal adviser to the local Palestinian commander. Engel is the Israeli media liaison at the district co-ordinating office.

The two sides of the shared headquarters are divided by a wire fence. But the gate between them is more often open than closed. Now they drink coffee together and even play volleyball across the wire.

It has not always been so relaxed. "The first time I sat playing chess on the Palestinian side," Engel says, "I found myself surrounded by 10 Arabs with Kalashnikovs automatics. I was very afraid."

It is only four months since Israeli and Palestinian forces exchanged fire in Ramallah and Nablus, two cities handed over earlier to Palestinian rule. If the initial uncertainty has subsided in the Hebron base, it remained palpable on a joint patrol I accompanied through an outlying Palestinian neighbourhood.

Paramilitary Israeli border police and Palestinian cops rode in separate jeeps. As the narrow road turned from asphalt to stones and rutted earth, the Israelis drew to one side and waved their Palestinian partners into the lead. Six weeks ago the border police were the hated enforcers of the occupation. They don't expect the Palestinians to forgive and forget quickly.

We stopped at Abu Simeh, a rocky plateau overlooking the ancient, contentious centre of Hebron, a hill city sacred to Jews and Muslims. To the right was the massive shrine of the patriarchs, where the warring faiths worship in sullen segregation. To the left was the Jewish quarter, home to 450 heavily guarded settlers. The joint patrol was there to make sure no vengeful Palestinian used the isolated site to snipe at the Jewish families down below.

"The Palestinian police have 15 checkpoints of their own to prevent demonstrations moving towards the Jewish enclave," explains the Israeli district commander. "We prevent Jewish demonstrations from our side."

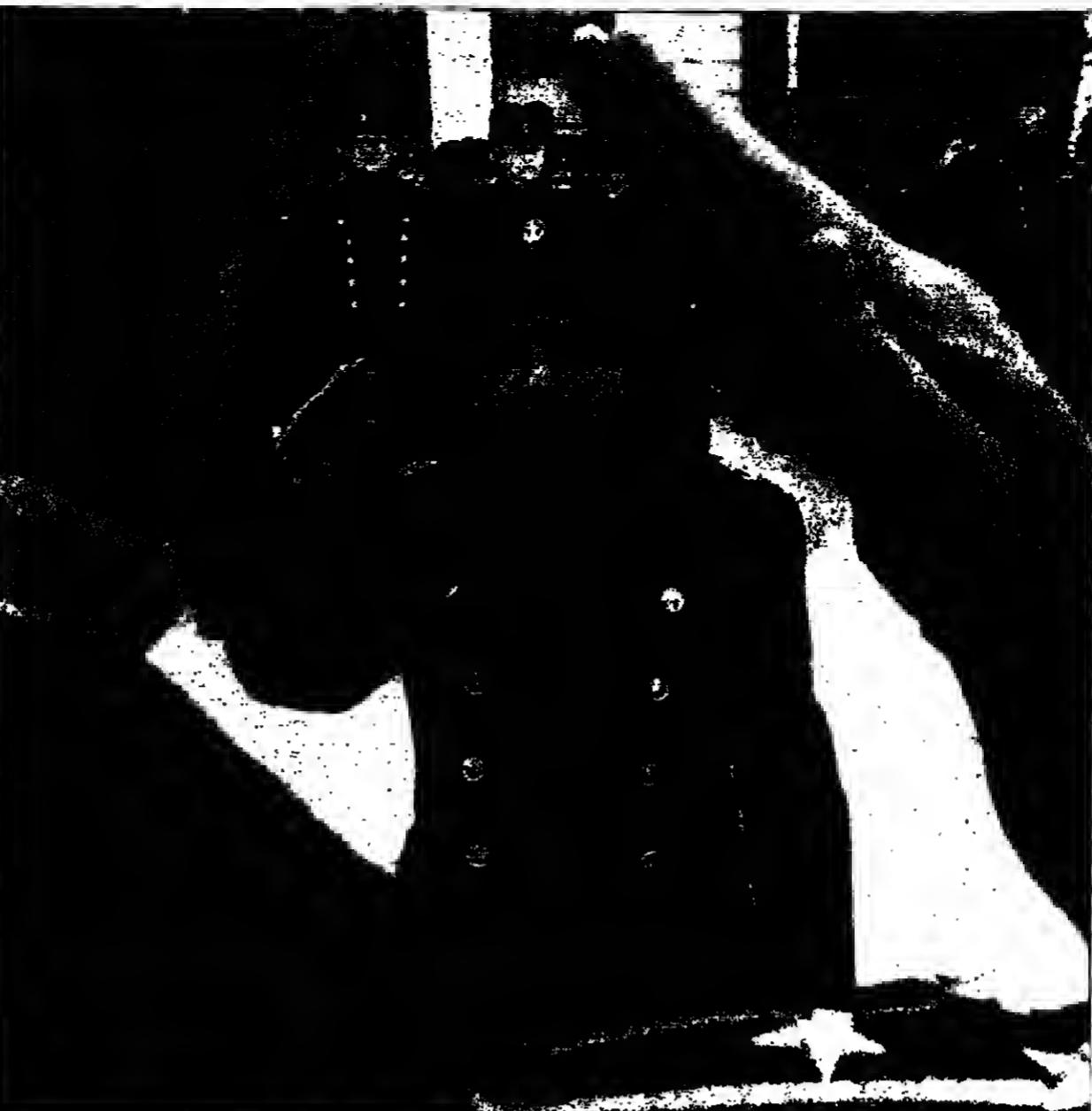
"Every Palestinian police station has a rapid-response team, each with 16 men. On our side, soldiers have standing orders to stop any Israeli shooting at Palestinians. If necessary, they may open fire at him."

Asked if he fears a return of the gun battles between their forces, an Israeli paramilitary shrugs: "I just hope our Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] doesn't cock things up again."

Hebron simmers, but for now at least the only contest is at the chess board.

■ Jerusalem (Reuters) — Mr Netanyahu, warned by police about self-incrimination, has hired a lawyer to protect his interests in an investigation of alleged government corruption.

Vaikov Weimot told Army Radio Mr Netanyahu hired him on Saturday night: "He is certain the police will prove his innocence in this investigation."



On parade: One of the Russian Sea Cadet Corps saluting an officer on his first attendance at a title-receiving ceremony in Kronstadt, 50km south of St Petersburg, yesterday, the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland. Photograph: Reuters

Tories move to cut ties with Albanian regime

Andrew Gammie

After years of enthusiastic support, centre-right parties in western Europe, including the British Conservatives, are rapidly distancing themselves from Albania's ruling Democratic Party because of growing concerns about corruption, police brutality and violations of basic political freedoms.

"In the light of the DP's actions over the last year, we now have to review whether the party is one we would want to do business with," according to one source inside the Conservative Party.

Punitive action is expected to come early next month in Paris at a meeting of the European Democratic Union, a club grouping centre-right parties from across the Continent, including the DP and the Conservatives. At the very least, the party is expected to be put "on

probation". Most likely, it will have its EDU membership suspended, although outright expulsion is also possible.

Ostensibly, the main cause for concern is the heavy-handed use of uniformed and plainclothes police in quelling recent self-government riots sparked by the collapse of Albania's get-rich-quick pyramid investment schemes. But given the DP's reluctance to confront mounting evidence of human rights abuses over the past three years, the real issue seems to be a desire to disown the party before association turns into scandal.

Close links with the DP were once considered an ideological imperative for EDU member parties, but have become ever more embarrassing as the Albanian government has come under fire for everything from election-rigging to involvement in arms, drugs and petrol trafficking. In Britain, the Albanian connection has risked turning into an electoral liability for the Tories following reports in *The Independent* about Albanian government collusion in organised crime and questions asked in the House of Commons by Labour MP Denis MacShane.

Until last May's rigged general elections, media reports about corruption and political repression in Albania were rare, and European conservatives threw themselves enthusiastically into the pro-Berisha camp.

In Britain, Mr Berisha's greatest champion has been Sir Geoffrey Patic, former vice-chairman of the Conservative Party.

Some other Conservatives appear to be equally unwilling to criticise the Democratic Party. The secretary of the Westminster Conservative Association, Donald Stewart, said he had found the Democratic Party

ian connection has risked turning into an electoral liability for the Tories following reports in *The Independent* about Albanian government collusion in organised crime and questions asked in the House of Commons by Labour MP Denis MacShane.

Until last May's rigged general elections, media reports about corruption and political repression in Albania were rare, and European conservatives threw themselves enthusiastically into the pro-Berisha camp.

In Britain, Mr Berisha's greatest champion has been Sir Geoffrey Patic, former vice-chairman of the Conservative Party.

Some other Conservatives appear to be equally unwilling to criticise the Democratic Party. The secretary of the Westminster Conservative Association, Donald Stewart, said he had found the Democratic Party

"entirely bona fide" on three visits to Albania in the past 18 months. Conservative officials said that Mr Stewart and others would be asked to modify their views or at least stop espousing them on behalf of the party.

Similar sea-changes in attitude appear to be taking place in the rest of Europe, starting with Leni Fischer, President of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

Mrs Fischer is regarded in Albania as a Berisha apologist, but at the end of January her assembly issued the Thessaloniki government with a list of demands on democratisation, the independence of the judiciary, press freedom and cross-party dialogue.

Challenged about her statements apparently supporting Mr Berisha in the past, her office said she had been misquoted and there was evidence of statements being fabricated in Albania to discredit her.

Cold comfort from a dead man in winter

MOSCOW DAYS

One of the pleasures of an early morning walk in my neck of the woods is the chance to commune silently with Ho Chi Minh for a minute or two. His moonish face shines out of an oval monument that stands, like a large up-turned bronze coin, on the corner of a few hundred yards from our monolithic apartment block.

For several years, he has stood there, casting an unmovable eye down on the tide of people who tramp out of the nearby metro station to mill around the scattering of kiosks, flower stands and vegetable stalls that stand along Trade Union Street at its junction with Dmitry Ulyanov Street (named after Lenin's brother).

At first, when I moved into our flat in south Moscow 15 months ago, I felt that Ho Chi Minh was an ugly presence, an outdated reminder of the Soviet Union's cynical support for the nationalist government in North Vietnam with the dual aim of maintaining the Communist empire and containing the United States which - just as indefensibly - was launching massive bombing raids on half of Capitalism.

I placed him in the same category as the guards who control the barriers that separate our compound from the outside world, or the women who sit morosely in glass booths just inside the entrances of our building, inspecting every new arrival with a beady eye - a stark reminder of a darker era.

But now, contemplating his features on a bright blue winter's morning, I see him differently. With his goatee and little smile, he is an island of stability, a bastion of permanence in a restless and fretful landscape.

Everything around him is changing. When I arrived, he used to stand opposite the Hanoi, a down-at-heels gambling joint that had a spectacularly bad restaurant, staffed by a waiter so gloomy he could barely bring himself to present you with a menu. Its small clientele appeared chiefly interested in drinking into the night, and hobnobbing with young hostesses.

That's gone. Ho Chi Minh now stands opposite an establishment called Rocky-111, a chic wine bar which seeks to draw in passers-by by playing rock music from a loudspeaker which is padlocked to the front door, lest someone make off with it. Young people gather around wooden tables to drink Corona beer, and to listen to the resident band. You could almost be in London or Paris, were it not for

the obviously down-at-heel population in the streets outside.

Not far away down Dmitry Ulyanov Street, where once stood a clapped-out repair shop whose staff still used an abacus to tot up their debts, we now have a salon where affluent Muscovite women can be waxed and plucked and trimmed in a parlour so modern that it has suction devices in the walls which whisk up discarded hair.

Further down the street, on the corner of a peeling, off-pink apartment block, hangs a small blue-coloured sign showing a female silhouette in repose. This advertises the other new arrival in the neighbourhood: a sex shop called Casanova.

Pornography was outlawed by the Communists, but it has been seized on with enthusiasm in capitalist Russia, finding a market even among a population which earns less than £200 (£124) a month. But even here there is a Soviet touch: a sign in the door

You could almost be in London or Paris, were it not for the down-at-heel population in the streets'

says it closes at 7pm, so paying little heed to the rhythm of the average libido, or the best way to make money - for the Moscow streets do not become really feral until a fair amount of vodka has flowed through the city's veins - usually after 10pm.

But the most striking development lies up Trade Union Street where we now have an enormous, overshadowing concrete and glass skyscraper housing a Russian bank, topped by a revolving green orb. I suppose this should be applauded as an example of the investment that Russia so desperately needs.

But, looking out from my ninth-floor apartment, I can't help feeling differently. I used to boast that, on a clear day, with binoculars, you could make out the towers of the Kremlin. All right, I know it's pitiful - but it made me feel as if I had a finger on the city's pulse.

But now, as I was silently complaining to Ho Chi Minh only the other day, all you can see is that hideous bank. He seemed to sympathise.

Phil Reeves

hundred die in India

in

a

t

to

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

t

arts

Don't make a drama out of a critic

THEATRE

St Nicholas

The Bush Theatre,
London

Where could you find a set of people even half as unassuming, well-adjusted, life-loving, nurturing, and eager to embrace new experiences as a bunch of theatre critics? For some unaccountable reason, this tends not to be a perception shared by dramatists. It's as if the epitome of self-hating failure that the theatre critic is privileged to feature in their works. Last year, a play on Off-Broadway, entitled *Arts and Leisure*, centred on a syndicated hack who had all but lost his humanity, the job having reduced him to judging moral issues and his own personal relationships in terms of what "works", or doesn't, theatrically. "There's something about racism in practice that works like a big cast-iron Broadway hit..."

Now, in *St Nicholas*, the new Conor McPherson one-man play at The Bush, a jaded Dublin theatre critic, lost in hard-drinking hack hell, goes through a form of emotional breakdown which involves a tragicomic obsession with a beautiful young actress and, somewhat less conventionally, a period of time living with and working for a household of vampires in London. The 25-year-old author scored a hit last year at this address with *This Lime Tree Bower*, a drama of overlapping monologues in which three characters gave their different versions of one unlikely weekend in a small, seedy, Irish seaside resort. The piece was praised for its narrative grip and laconic comedy. For at least half of the new play, brilliantly performed by Brian Cox, these virtues are again on vibrant display.

"I wanted to let my compassion seep out across the stage. Handicapped people in love. Queers and lesbians absorbing each other. A liberal, fucking, all-encompassing... you know. But nothing came. Nothing ever came." Even when

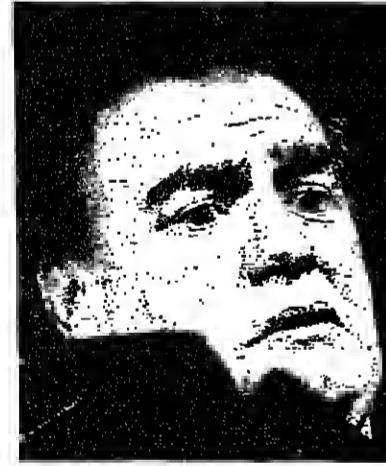
— or especially when — recalling his now defunct idealism and creative ambitions, the tone is one of sardonic self-contempt, the lines timed with a wonderful off-hand scathingness and many a collusive hoist of the eyebrows by Mr Cox who, with his great, craggy, sensitive face and fleshy build, looks like an ex-university rugby player run to tilfysomething seed. Via flashes of swift, brutal insight ("I'd never taken the care to form an opinion. I just had them" ... "drunken pig-headedness being past off as authority" ... "fuck you think I was going to surround myself with people who were succeeding"), the writing pulls you into an existence which, precisely because of its corrupting, pseudo-powerful easiness and the cocoon provided by other befuddled failures, has become a kind of living death.

I much preferred the first half of the piece, where the reviewer, estranged from his family, gives excruciatingly hilarious accounts of the scrapes he gets into because of his obsession with the actress. As a critic who has his notices written before the show is over, he engineers a pub encounter with the director and cast of the play she is in which he's just reviewed. He finds him self telling them that he's given the show a raw and becomes, under soul-searingly false pretences, the drunken toast of the party.

The second half has its drossieries, too, when, after further humiliations with this cast in London, the critic, granted a new supernatural sexual attractiveness, winds up pimping in clubs for a household of vampires. Come again? Well, quite, but then the question marks dangling over this tale seem to be the whole point, as the play turns into a rather clumping and contrived meditation on, and demonstration of, the responsible human need for stories to mean something. That rationale for its fancifulness did not, I'm afraid, stop the attention of this contemptible critic from drifting.

To 22 March. Booking: 0113-743 3788

Paul Taylor



Flashes of swift, brutal insight: Brian Cox as the jaded critic

Photograph: Geralin Lewis

CLASSICAL
RPO / Daniele Gatti

Barbican Hall, London

which the felicity of the music was conveyed "on the breath". That's breathtaking in the literal sense of the word. Those little turns of expression, the falling away of the voice and other "vocal" mannerisms. Even where the music inclined towards hyperverticalism, there was shape. The dappled closing pages, tenuous violin arpeggios catching the moonlight, were still vibrating long after Gatti's hands had stopped moving.

Gatti has a wonderful nose for atmosphere, drama, the *theatre* of music. But beyond that — as befitting an Italian whose roots are, of course, in opera — there is his instinctive way with phrasing. The singer's way. Already he's encouraging from his RPO strings a freer, more flexible, more imperative manner. Be aware of the shape and purpose of the phrase, he's saying, and the sound will follow. There's still a lot of work to be done. But this performance of the Schoenberg was notable above all for the way in

balance by the unease of it all. Still, at least we got to eavesdrop de Larrocha quietly reminiscing her way through the central *Salón assai*. And for a moment or two there was no charmer like an old charmer. Night in the gardens of... well, Ravel was a Basque.

It was not a piece one would expect to be looking back on from the connoisseurs opening pages of Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* ("Death and Transfiguration"). Indeed, in the circumstances, the juxtaposition was perhaps even a little unfortunate. But Gatti once again effected the change of mood with great skill, deep breathing his way through an operatic account of the long introduction, solos from oboe, flute, and solo violin drifting in and out of our consciousness like tiny arioso. The life-death struggle generated a lot of heat, the timpani's cross-rhythms shing across the bar like convulsions. With each restatement of the transfiguration theme I was increasingly put in mind of Toscanini's famous recording. It was that exciting, that intense, the transfiguration itself a real Jacob's ladder affair, slow and exalted with trombones and horns bravely nailing those final rungs of the heavenly ascent, I do believe the Royal Philharmonic have found themselves a saviour in Daniel Gatti.

Edward Seckerson

Tomorrow in the Tabloid: Tom Lubbock on Lovis Corinth at the Tate. Plus more from Dr Phil Hammond



Four little maids from school: children in the Glyndebourne cast, here in rehearsal, imagined a world without adults. Slowly they began to reveal adolescent secrets

Photograph: Mike Hoban

Little beggars' opera

Sleep-overs, playground rites of passage, Chinese monkeys

Add the scriptwriter for *The Bill*, the composer for *Hamish Macbeth*, and Glyndebourne's first children's opera hits the stage.

By Michael Church



except football. They told us that, if you carried on playing primary games in secondary school, you got written off as 'sod'. This tension became one of the keys to our opera."

Plaice, who more often hauls police stations in his researches for *The Bill*, decided to put his draft libretto through

that TV show's story-line process: starting with a half-page thought, expanding it to a page, then to its full length.

"It was a good discipline," he says. "And the kids were our advisers at every stage. We've been able to get inside their culture, and check the results against reality. I think this may be the first time that the words of the Metropolitan Police caution have ever been set to music." No doubt John Lunn's experience as composer for the Scottish TV series *Hamish Macbeth* came in handy. The ink-monkeys, Plaice adds, are a living metaphor for the story's spray-painted protagonist: the title — *Misper* — is police argot for "missing person".

Alison Chitty, who designed the show while staging *Cardiff East* in the Cotesloe and *Turandot* at the Bastille in Paris (and was also production designer on Mike Leigh's Oscar-nominated movie, *Secrets and Lies*), says that *Misper* has proved one of the hardest things she's ever had to realize: "It's the phenomenal speed with which the locations change: natural for film, but infinitely harder in opera. With film, you can wield the scissors, but opera-time is finite. John will write a set number of bars, and during that time we have to get from a bit of waste ground in Sussex, to a library in ancient China, to a modern teenager's bedroom. I'm doing a lot of tricks with lighting."

For her different purposes, Chitty too did some grassroots research among school-age kids. "I told them this was an educational project, and that the person who needed educating was me." She quizzed the youngsters on how they decorated their bedrooms, and on the ever-changing rules of adolescent sartorial etiquette. While Plaice was learning the meaning of terms like *dweeb* and *doh*, Chitty learnt what *vans* were, which Reeboks were in vogue, and which shirts should have a button at the back of the neck. But she also hired a Chinese calligraphy specialist, so that the ideograms

decorating the final set should be historically accurate. "If authenticity is worth going for at all, it's worth going for 100 per cent."

Two hundred teenagers turned up for auditions last November. Casting the story's 13-year-old victim and 13-year-old

heroine was no problem, but the part of the chief bully had to be advertised in the local papers. Each main role was double-cast, partly to take the strain off young voices, partly to give more performers a chance. The handful of adult roles are being filled by leading operatic professionals, including Omar Ebrahim and Mary King.

A straw poll among the juve leads reveals that almost all want a stage career: none seem put off by its penury and precariousness. A hoy whom I first notice doing backflips and casually balancing upside-down on a chair turns out to be a champion tumbler, with designs on the next Olympics. Another wants to be a professional mountain-hiker (professions sound fun these days). Some have already worked as operatic extras: those for whom this is a first experience are high on the excitement, though in many cases visibly shocked to discover, during rehearsals, that the part which has engulfed their lives is a mere brushstroke on the grander canvas. The alterna-

ceating easts are being exceptionally nice about each other, gallantly praising one another's qualities, though rivalries — surprise, surprise — are discernible beneath the surface.

On the day I attend rehearsals, the technical director is totting up the cost of 42 monkey-suits and tails the score, with its clever interweaving of pro and amateur voices, is still — 14 days from curtain-up — in final gestation; and the conductor, Andrea Quinn (already an old hand at dealing with young performers thanks to her regular job as Music Director of the London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra), is trying to induce her novice opera singers to project their sound. This is their first day in the real auditorium, and they are fazed by the yawning chasm of the pit. When they reach the end of the run-through, and the chief ink-monkey crawls back into his master's drawer, the stage is full of misgivings and lumps in throats. For this is Glyndebourne. And this is them doing it.

Misper: schools matinee 3pm Thurs (all seats £5); public performances 3pm Fri, 3pm Sat (children £5/£7, adults £7/£9), at Glyndebourne Oper House, nr Lewes, East Sussex. Booking: 01273 815025

and settled. The electronic elements, which also briefly penetrated the instrumental sections, matched, extended and transformed their sonorities into chiming bells. It was the instrumental writing which dazzled with its seemingly casual and unexpected rhythms and harmonies, elegant and effervescent.

Boulez says he doesn't like to predict the end of a piece, and clearly he doesn't mean this — or, perhaps, these — to be heard in one particular order. Yet a sense of organic growth, or consequence, was perceptible — with so much none-literary imitation among the instruments and electronics, it felt as if one thing suggested another.

... *explosante-fixe*... is very cool, and though Boulez mentions the influence of *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, his taste for sounds that are sensuous, and the improvisatory, freely associative effect of the music, bring him closer to Debussy than to Stravinsky.

Adrian Jack

CLASSICAL
Sinfonia 21 St John's London Sinfonietta QEH

Friday's Queen Elizabeth Hall concert in "Sounding the Century", George Benjamin conducting the London Sinfonietta. Three more of Stravinsky's essays in popular or jazz styles, *Tango*, *Preludium* and the *Elton Concerto*, made for an interesting silence before he answered: "Perhaps." He might have thought to point out that decay brought rich fermentation, and why did Szymanowski's perfectly exquisite score need to be defined by the possible influences on it? That was a more pertinent consideration in the case of Claude Vivier's *Lonely Child* (1981), since the Canadian composer reacted against his avant-garde formation with an incantatory style dressed in weird but pleasing microtonal chords that evoked a newly invented exoticism.

Varese's Octandre opened other end of the composer's intervening thought processes, were two "Transitoires", each roughly 15 minutes, followed by "Original", about six minutes, linked by two very brief electronic sections, when the lights dramatically went down. Scored for eight strings (stage right), seven brass and seven woodwind (stage left) with three solo flutes in front of them, the music confirmed Boulez's growing concern with proliferating arabesque and recognisable patterning. The first "Transitoire" was breathless and shimmering. The second began more broadly flowing, admitted more varied gestures and a sense of relaxation. "Original", giving one solo flute (Sophie Cheret) very cool and collected the limelight, wafted

هذا من الأصل



Designer Warren Griffiths (above) has turned to his high-flying customers to model his collection for London Fashion Week. Katie Sampson talks to three of them about what the Nineties career woman really wants to wear



Efua Baker, singer, songwriter and former model (left)

When I was younger the desire to buy a particular designer garment or beauty treatment could completely consume me, but I'm glad to say I no longer live in that constant state of misery. I still love clothes but I've become more choosy over the years and I now hate shopping. In the last six years, since having a family, I've become increasingly turned on to clothes that are washable and durable and whereas I was once willing to fork out for a £60 face cream containing caviar I now swear by beauty products like Vaseline. Recently I rang a shop to complain about an expensive designer jumper which had disintegrated after three wears and the assistant said "but you're not supposed to wear it that much!" — how ridiculous!

I dress for myself nowadays and it is important to me that I feel good in what I am wearing. At the moment I'm keen on my beige army trousers with big pockets — actually I probably wear them a little too often as they are so easy to match with a sparkly top and a pair of Prada slip-on's for inside/outside wear. I like eclectic outfits, but they usually include something special. I won't wear clothes that give me a slouchy feeling: I believe that if your clothes are stained or saggy then that's

how you end up feeling. For this reason I also dress for bed: I stand in my wardrobe and think about nightwear that reflects the mood I am in or want to make. My friends think I'm nuts, but it makes sense to me.

My wardrobe is humungus, but I have the excuse of sharing it with my husband Jazzy B (of Soul II Soul) and he has a devastating collection of clothes — unlike me, he never buys one off-rubish items. I've got a lot of shoes, many of which I rarely wear, some never. I also borrow things from my daughter's dressing up box since things that look ridiculous one year can look great the next, a pink shirt with frills for example.

I like the recent trend of using more real people on the runway since there's nothing especially inspiring about supermodels. The fact that the model is a person doesn't come into many designer minds.

In my experience London Fashion Week doesn't mean much for people's wardrobes. I will be going to a couple of the shows but more for the social side of it. I am definitely more interested in seeing interesting genuine people wearing genuine things than models whose clothes appear to be wearing them.



Jenny Runacre, actress and artist (above)

Most of the clothes in my wardrobe are variations on a similar theme. For example, I've always worn men's suits, mainly because I'm tall with broad shoulders which makes them the most comfortable of garments. I also like wearing mini skirts and have a fabulously elegant Antony Price cocktail dress which I've been wearing for years and years. I have never had that desperate need to know what is being worn for this season. I prefer unusual, comfortable and stylish clothes which I can put together myself. If I can find a garment incorporating all these factors I am likely to buy it and wear it again and again.

Designer gear is so wonderful when it's well cut or hangs nicely that I will save up for something like a Yohji Yamamoto or a pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes but I don't necessarily go looking for expensive clothes. Sometimes I discover a shop like Warren's, fall in love with a particular line and stick with it, yet I am just as likely to go to find something fabulous at Kensington or Camden Market. Part of the art of dressing is the ability to accompany a garment with the right accessories in such a way that no one necessarily knows where the outfit is from.

For an actress I am a little off-beat in the way that I dress. In order to be even considered for a glamorous part in a big budget film one needs to dress accordingly for the audition: designer gear, usually involving legs rather than trousers, and everything accounted for down to the last detail. But fringe shows allow you to wear more or less what you wish, which in my case could well be combat trousers, a long-sleeved T-shirt and my DM boots with the ubiquitous leather jacket.

Few people want to be dowdy and there's nothing wrong with following fashion, but being enslaved to it gives the impression of the wearer not being entirely sure either of their identity or what they want from life. I prefer the simplicity of clothes you can take home without being taken over, clothes with enough room for your own personality. One of my teenage daughters is in a band and when I watch them dressing up it's riveting because of the totally individual way that they style their look.

Meet the new model army

Margaret O'Rorke, sculptor and potter

What does the successful career woman really want from her clothes? As London Fashion Week kicks off, this is the sink or swim question exercising the minds of designers, buyers and retailers as the attempt to transplant catwalk glamour and grit to street level begins.

The designer Warren Griffiths may have found the answer in his "Votes for Women" collection which he launches today. Eschewing the costly formality of the traditional show using models "of perfection", Griffiths has chosen to unveil his autumn/winter collection from his own shop using seven of his customers — including an investment banker, a barrister and a sculptor — as "role models".

"I want to dress dynamic women — my muse is the type of woman who has a lifestyle I admire and emulate," he says. "I'm not interested in dressing young girls."

His inspiration comes from hearing his customers discuss what they need from an outfit: the results are clothes which are conversation pieces in themselves. The materials used include reflective glass thread, paper, silk, denim and raffia. Yet these garments are far from eccentric: the fabrics are sculpted into outfits that tend to transcend the boundaries between daytime and evening wear. Here, three of Griffiths' models wear clothes from the new collection and reveal exactly what they look for when preparing to shell out their own hard-earned cash on a garment.

Warren Griffiths, 30 Lamb's Conduit Street, London WC1N 3LE (0171-404 3987)

I used to make my clothes, but since I started pottery 10 years ago I've had no time for anything but work. Consequently I spend most of my life in legging and T-shirts. I work in these outifts and am ashamed to say that I also pop out to the shops in them, but I've always gone to a good hairdresser and will spend a lot of money on shoes — the last pair cost about £140 from Pied a Terre.

There is an irony in the fact that the more successful you become, the less time you have to look at it, yet a successful look is expected of you. I need to find clothes to suit a limited budget that will also feel and look special — wonderful, casual and comfortable clothes.

Dressing-up becomes difficult as you get older, because you want to look attractive yet not overly sexy. Frantically busy professional women need to be able to rely on clothes that they feel and look good in. For me there's the additional desire to have sculptural clothes that move with the body. I don't need fashion for my sense of well-being, but I do admire spiritual, fun and comfortable clothes. When I met Warren it was a magical experience, because his constant search for materials was totally unusual, much more akin to an artist's outlook.

It always amazes me that you can see wonderful, glittering things in fashion shows yet the outfit of the average woman in the street looks far from exciting. Drabness saddens me desperately. We all know that you feel different when you put on something you love, yet people seem frightened to express themselves with clothes.

I don't feel pressurised to dress in a certain way because I want my outfits to be right for me. I certainly won't dress to fit in with someone else's ideal. You shouldn't say things that you don't mean and you shouldn't wear things that you don't feel are right for you either. I would suggest that people who've got the time should go to the London fashion week as a means of stimulating the imagination, but whatever you do, don't take what's on show as "the truth".



Jenny Runacre, actress and artist (above)

Most of the clothes in my wardrobe are variations on a similar theme. For example, I've always worn men's suits, mainly because I'm tall with broad shoulders which makes them the most comfortable of garments. I also like wearing mini skirts and have a fabulously elegant Antony Price cocktail dress which I've been wearing for years and years. I have never had that desperate need to know what is being worn for this season. I prefer unusual, comfortable and stylish clothes which I can put together myself. If I can find a garment incorporating all these factors I am likely to buy it and wear it again and again.

Designer gear is so wonderful when it's well cut or hangs nicely that I will save up for something like a Yohji Yamamoto or a pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes but I don't necessarily go looking for expensive clothes. Sometimes I discover a shop like Warren's, fall in love with a particular line and stick with it, yet I am just as likely to go to find something fabulous at Kensington or Camden Market. Part of the art of dressing is the ability to accompany a garment with the right accessories in such a way that no one necessarily knows where the outfit is from.

For an actress I am a little off-beat in the way that I dress. In order to be even considered for a glamorous part in a big budget film one needs to dress accordingly for the audition: designer gear, usually involving legs rather than trousers, and everything accounted for down to the last detail. But fringe shows allow you to wear more or less what you wish, which in my case could well be combat trousers, a long-sleeved T-shirt and my DM boots with the ubiquitous leather jacket.

Few people want to be dowdy and there's nothing wrong with following fashion, but being enslaved to it gives the impression of the wearer not being entirely sure either of their identity or what they want from life. I prefer the simplicity of clothes you can take home without being taken over, clothes with enough room for your own personality. One of my teenage daughters is in a band and when I watch them dressing up it's riveting because of the totally individual way that they style their look.

A night for Lethal Lisa, big momma of the Brits

Plummy voice, size 18 and a match for Michael Jackson's choreographers. David Lister meets the woman who brought the awards global recognition



Lisa Anderson: 'I talk posh. That's the way I am'

When Jonathan King sends round robins to key figures in the music industry complaining about vote-rigging at the Brit awards, a constant target of the barbs in his highly entertaining missives is a woman he calls Lethal Anderson.

For Lethal read Lisa. She can be lethal and had to be last year when Jarvis Cocker took the Michael Jackson's choreographers, far more burly than choreographers have a right to be, tried in choreographic parlance to land him one. Cocker attempted to flee the building. Choreographers gave chase. Lisa Anderson weighed in and kept the warring artists apart.

The Brit awards tonight will not just celebrate the best of British pop. They will also make £300,000 profit for the Brit School for young musicians and be televised across Britain and America. Anderson can take a lot of the credit

for that success, yet outside the record industry she is almost unknown.

She was the first woman to head a record company when she became managing director of RCA in 1989. When she was sacked after some internal politicking, the major record labels asked her to replace the ubiquitous Jonathan King and become executive producer of the Brits.

After six years of Anderson, the Brits is now an internationally known, brand name, the voting structure has been democratised, it brings in £300,000 a year, compared with the £10,000 it made in 1990, is televised across the UK and America, and is the rock event of the year. She switched the television contract from the BBC which didn't pay, to independent television, which did, and had the brochure magazine sold in 2,500 shops.

Last year's Jarvis v Jackson spectacle was probably one of its greatest

moments. How did she deal with it? "I'm a big woman with an imposing voice," she explains. Which is probably more than enough to frighten Michael Jackson.

Actually, while she does harp on about her size rather, Anderson does not come across as big at all, more like the elegant but pertly 45-year-old mother that she is. "Oh, come on," she choruses, shaking her black curly hair. "How can you be elegant and a size 18? And I'm wearing a vest."

The vest can be put down to living in a 15th century Kent mansion with David Campbell, former manager of UB40, currently house-husband, and their children, Hereward ("yes, he loves the name") and Hannah.

The children are deprived of only one adolescent prerequisite. Mum tends to rave about the latest bands even before they do. "It's a bit of a problem for me. Your first rebellion is

finding a piece of music and you hope your parents don't like it. But I like the same music as my kids."

With a plumby voice and hearty, infectious laugh, she does not sound like a music industry person. She certainly does not talk like the woman whose duties have included marketing the Sex Pistols.

"I know," she acknowledges, "when I came in to the industry 20 years or so ago everyone still found it necessary to speak like David Bailey. But I just couldn't be bothered with all that. I talk posh. I'm middle class. That's the way I am. I'm not going to disguise it."

She did make one pledge. "I made a decision not to suffer from guilt about leaving the children or from jet lag."

"Is it a sexist business, I wondered? She rolled back in her chair with a characteristic guffaw and waved her hands aloft. "Oh, yes, oh yes, oh yes."

affirmations delivered as a crescendo. Perhaps she was thinking of the sales conferences she had to attend preceded by the statutory soft porn videos.

"They would say to me, 'Where's your sense of humour?'" I said. "Evidently not in my cock." It's like a club. It's all geared to going into a clam, into a posse. And generally speaking women don't do posse. Someone said that in the music biz either you are a babe or an ersatz boy, unless you're over 35 in which case you're an old dog. It's so true.

"During my record company years it was going on all around, lots of booking on sofas and other extra-curricular activities. But I never got involved in all that. When Richard Branson tried to throw me in the swimming pool, I simply glared at him and said, 'No, Richard. I've been to public school. I've done all that, been there. Don't.'

the leader page

In government, Labour must learn to say no

If the opinion polls are right, Tony Blair is heading for a bigger landslide victory in nine weeks' time even than the 144-seat majority Margaret Thatcher won in 1983. The conventional wisdom is that Labour's lead in the polls will narrow as polling day beckons. There is no reason why it should. The economy may be improving, but it has been for some time and John Major's ministers seem quite incapable of taking time out from July's Conservative leadership contest to put on a facade of unity.

The Labour lead seems to have fallen since the turn of the year, but only because Gallup belatedly came into line with other pollsters, revamping its survey methods completely and adjusting its figures to take "reluctant Tories" into account. In fact, the gap between the parties has hardly changed for a whole year now: since last February the Tories have gained about three points, two from the Liberal Democrats, one from Labour.

However, the conventional wisdom is right in the sense that the disparity between Blair and Major does not feel as great as that between Thatcher and Foot. She had just won a war, and the Labour Party was a shambles. And, even after all the agonising and adjusting in the number-crunching fraternity over the failure of the opinion polls last time,

there remains scope for scepticism about their figures now. There has been some evidence from large random surveys that adjusted polls are still overstating Labour's lead, perhaps by as much as five percentage points. The average Labour lead over the past month of 18 points would be cut to 13 points. Even so, this would give Mr Blair a majority of more than 100 seats – the sort of margin by which Mrs Thatcher won in 1987.

The *Independent* will enter the fray next month with polls of its own, carried out by Harris Research. We will report our findings in more cautious terms than our rivals, and we will try to present a balanced picture based on all polling and other evidence. For the moment, however, unless this week's Wirral by-election suggests a dramatic Tory recovery, that picture is of Mr Blair heading into a general election set fair to form a majority Labour government.

So, it is fair to probe a bit deeper into the gap between the positions espoused by Mr Blair and his team now and what they would actually do in government. For the campaign until 1 May will not be about the outcomes a Labour government would like to see, but about catching out the Tories and avoiding being caught out. Nor do the issues which dominate election campaigns usually dom-



ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 071-293 2900 / 071-345 2900 FAX 071-293 2435 / 071-345 2435

inate the government that follows.

Most of the challenges that the new administration will face will be those of governance rather than policy. Northern Ireland may be relapsing into conflict, there will be testing negotiations on a new European treaty to be concluded in a few weeks, contentious legislation for Scottish devolution to put through the Commons plus the trials of the unexpected.

We know how ill-prepared Labour was in 1964, after 13 years out of power. So Mr Blair's lot have been to management school, they have talked

to eager civil servants and on policy they have done all their betraying before they drew up their manifesto nearly a year early.

Much depends on the relationships between Labour's "big guns", Brown, Cook and Prescott, who do not get on. This is the context for persistent speculation about the personalities and dispositions of a Labour Cabinet. Weekend reports suggest John Prescott has been promised the Deputy Prime Minister title he wants, as well as a big department such as Environment and Transport merged. If this raises the profile of green

issues fine, but the real question is whether title-fights and empire-building would get in the way of sound administration.

However, Mr Blair is unlikely to tolerate the kind of ministerial indiscipline that has plagued Mr Major: the threat of the sack would be real because there are talented middle-rankers waiting their turn, and he would at least start with backbenchers free of embittered ex-ministers.

So if Mr Blair wants to give his government a sense of direction, he would be well placed to do so. But it is still unclear what that would be. We hope democratic reforms will gain a momentum of their own if the question of how we are governed is opened up, but, like Roy Jenkins's liberalising social reforms of the 1960s, that would probably happen against the grain of the Prime Minister's cautious instincts.

It is sometimes argued that devolution and electoral reform would be a good way of making the country feel as if a Labour government had made a difference at a time when the scope for action on "bread-and-butter" issues of prosperity and jobs is so limited. But we do not advocate them for that reason: our argument is that extending and enriching democracy is part of taking on vested interests, spreading wealth and improving life-chances for all.

Certainly, a new government's room for economic manoeuvre would be limited. But it will be all the more so if Mr Blair fails to take on the Establishment. Already his unwillingness to say that anyone would lose out under Labour is unconvincing: in government it would be disastrous.

The Euro-sceptic song contest

The Referendum Party has found another fun way to spend Sir James Goldsmith's £20m, by recording a single called "Let the People Decide". There's enough material now for a Media Studies PhD on the history of polit-pop, starting with "Seven-and-a-half Per Cent Swing" by the Floating Voters in 1970. After "Let's Go Liberal", featuring David Steel's voice over a thumping disco beat, in the 1979 election, it would be dominated by you-know-who, with "Hello Maggie" (1979) and "It's Maggie For Me" (1983), by Vince Hill, and, for balance, "Stand Down Margaret" by The Beat, which made it to Number 22 in 1980. But, given Sir James's recent difficulties, it is the subtitle of the new single that gets our vote: "The Rabbie Army Song".

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Russian myth of 'betrayal' by Nato

Sir: Andrei Olenin writes (letter, 19 February) that "the post-German unification process has shown that Nato reneged on its pledge not to expand eastwards after the Warsaw Pact's dissolution. Why should we believe Nato this time?"

In the "German unification process", Soviet fears were certainly addressed by a treaty commitment that the only forces stationed in former East Germany would be "German units of territorial defence which are not integrated into alliance structures" (Keessing's *Record of World Events*, 37/11). Has this been violated?

The treaty contained no clauses relative to the Warsaw Pact's dissolution, since that was not then internationally assumed – indeed the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty then being negotiated was based on the principle of force parity (within Europe) between Nato and the Warsaw Pact, the assumption being that both would continue, though "no longer adversaries".

The Pact was, however, falling to pieces, and it formally decided in February 1991 on the early dissolution of its military structures. That month Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary sought "total integration into the European political, economic, security and legislative order", which, they soon made clear, they took to include Nato membership.

Nato thus had to respond to the wish of many ex-Warsaw Pact members to join. It was initially cool: foreign ministers declared in June 1991 that "we will not seek unilateral advantage from the changed situation in Europe nor threaten the legitimate interests of any state", and in October Nato officials are reported as stating that the organisation was "not prepared to entertain the notion of membership" for ex-Warsaw Pact countries (Keessing's, p. 385/13).

Half a decade later there has been a reversal of this attitude, and one can argue as to whether or not the change was wise. But I am not sure that it equates with the re-enacting of a "pledge", as claimed by Mr Olenin. Perhaps he has further justification. But to a casual observer, it looks rather as if a potentially dangerous "Western betrayal" myth is building.

J P D DUNBAIN
St Edmund Hall, Oxford



justified on security or any other ground. This treatment has rightly been condemned by Amnesty International as cruel, inhuman and degrading.

In October last year, Professor Joseph Rothblat, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, appealed personally to President Weizman to show clemency to Vanunu, but to no avail. Now there is another opportunity for us to make known our concern for Vanunu's well-being. We call on politicians and members of the public to join us in this humanitarian appeal for the immediate release of Mordchai Vanunu.

PETER BENENSON
PETER PRICE
ANDREW WILSKI
BRUCE KENT
JAKOB VON UEXKULL
Trustees for the Campaign to Free Vanunu
London SE1

Invest to boost UK exports

Sir: If the Lords survive and British manufacturing goes down the plughole, it will be because, as an ancient duke once told me: "Businessmen are so inarticulate."

There is no point in asking whether investment in the UK is "unusually low" ("Rust belt romantics", 20 February). The question is whether it is as high as we need, and the answer is a resounding "No."

It is clearly not high enough to employ the two million who are out of work and cut their £25bn annual cost to the exchequer, nor to recover our long-standing trade surplus in manufacturing.

Diane Coyle says that "private sector business investment is about the same, relative to the size of the economy, as in the other big advanced economies". But that condemns us to an economy which is not big enough to give us the exports needed to balance our trade, nor to pay for the long-neglected demands of the public sector, health, education and housing.

Diane Coyle's eminent businessman cannot increase industrial investment by waving a wand. The cost of financing investment in the UK is 40 per cent higher than that of our nearest continental rivals because we will insist on keeping a yo-yo currency which adds to the risk of investment for export and which also has a long-standing tendency to inflation. The political rhetoric which wraps the Union Jack round our depreciated currency leaves hard-headed businessmen cold.

The substitute for the rust-belt industries is a rate of investment in new products high enough to overtake our competitors again and regain the share of trade which we lost in the Eighties. We will not do that so long as the high risk of investment in sterling enables our main continental competitors to put down 40 per cent more investment – 40 per cent more new products – for the same interest cost.

Sir FRED CATHERWOOD
Balsham, Cambridge
(The author was Conservative Member of the European Parliament for Cambridge and North Bedfordshire from 1984-94)

Why do farmers waste water?

Sir: The climate must not carry the whole can for water shortages ("It's a rainer than average February, so why are the water companies talking again about crisis?", 22 February).

Many years ago, my father taught me to water the garden only after sundown. The plants don't scorch and the water is put to best use by sinking into the soil overnight, without significant evaporation.

So why are farmers allowed to flog our precious water supplies heavenwards in the heat of the day? Last summer, in this region of East Anglia, such wasteful practice was observed daily, often in temperatures of 80F and over.

Given that farmers either tap into valuable and ever-diminishing aquifer sources, or abstract from rivers which eventually feed reservoirs, can the extravagant daytime use of this method of irrigation be justified?

BARBARA POINTON
Thriplow, Cambridgeshire

Becket and I

Sir: David Aarons (comment, 15 February) attributes to me several weird views which I certainly do not hold.

It is because I believe my fellow citizens deserve and can appreciate the best that has been thought and said in the realms of doctrine, liturgy and worship, that I am a member of the Prayer Book Society, which

aims to keep the Book of Common Prayer in use in the church.

At the time I was approached for comment, I was given the impression that the Becket relic was to be permanently returned to the Cathedral, not just for exhibition purposes. I stick to the belief that the shifting of human remains from one venue to another, except for some dire necessity, is lacking in respect. The placing of them on open display for the purpose of tourism is similarly disrespectful, and if it is done to encourage pilgrimage or prayer then it indicates a pre-Reformation theology in which prayer offered the presence of relics has more validity than other prayer.

MARGARET THOMPSON
Secretary, The Prayer Book Society
London EC4

Tip for Gummer

Sir: Your leading article on John Gummer and his warnings of global warming (21 February) concludes with the advice to tax energy. While not disagreeing, I feel that it would be better if you advised him not to tax attempts to save energy.

If I buy loft insulation, pay a contractor to put in cavity-wall insulation, pay for double glazing, or buy energy-efficient light bulbs – all as advocated by our government – that same government sits back rubbing its hands in glee and pocketing 17.5 per cent VAT on the value of my purchases.

S C BLACK
Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham

Red Cross list of war babies

Sir: The case of four-year-old Edita Kerenova ("Family furious as judge says war baby must stay", 18 February) highlights the reasons why the Red Cross takes specific steps to ensure that families living in armed conflict situations either remain together or are reunited as soon as possible.

The British Red Cross keeps a register for all children coming into the country without their parents or usual carers. This register allows us to hold, in confidence, details on young people which will help us to locate them and restore family contact should there be an enquiry from a parent or close relative via the Red Cross International Tracing and Messages Services. We ask that anyone looking after a child from abroad makes sure that we have this vital information.

No doubt there will be a number of cases similar to Edita's where foster parents in Britain wish to adopt Bosnian children in their charge.

The Red Cross urges that enquiries are first undertaken, and properly followed up, through the Red Cross, to find out if relatives are still alive and able to care for such children.

In my experience, tracing enquiries can take some time and a period of least two years should elapse before any adoption procedures begin.

This allows time for information to be gathered and a family reunion to take place if circumstances allow.

SANDRA SINGER
British Red Cross
London SW1

My ancestor was killed at Benin

Sir: I totally agree with the Labour MP Bernie Grant about returning the Benin artefacts to their rightful owners ("The looting of Benin", 22 February). I am writing to Mr Grant to organise compensation for the descendants of the brave and heroic people killed during the rape of Benin in 1897 – one of whom was my great-great-grandfather.

O OLOGBOSEERE
London E12

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 071-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk.
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

هذا من الأصل

I to say

The Euro-song
Song contest

Counting the £10bn cost of British illiteracy

Michael Barber

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank recruits employees from over 50 different national education systems. It is not alone. Each day that passes, more businesses find themselves recruiting staff globally. This has profound implications for our national education system. Unless its standards match those of the best worldwide, our young people may find that in the global job market they fall far behind their peers from Singapore, New Zealand or Germany. They will have been betrayed.

In setting up the Literacy Task Force, which will report on Thursday, David Blunkett anticipated this challenge. Its task has been to design a strategy which, if pursued over a five to ten year period, would ensure that all eleven-year-olds could not only read but read well. If we want our school and college leaving standards to match the best in the 21st century, we must first ensure that reading standards are transformed.

In the 1996 national tests, only 57 per cent of pupils achieved or exceeded the standard expected of eleven year olds. International comparisons suggest that in literacy we are in the second division, well behind New Zealand and the United States, to mention just English-speaking examples. Most worryingly of all, we have a long tail of under-performing schools, not just in urban areas. The costs to a country of illiteracy, in lost business, remedial education, crime and benefit payments have been calculated by accountants Ernst & Young to be over £10 billion per annum.

The present government has put the issue of literacy on the agenda. It has also robustly and repeatedly criticised primary teachers for not teaching properly. Yet – amazingly – there has never been a major national initiative to enable all primary teachers to learn the most effective methods of teaching reading. No wonder so many primary teachers are bewildered and confused. As the criticism is heaped upon them, they find themselves basing their teaching approach upon a distant recollection of what they learnt when they trained. This is an unacceptably haphazard state of affairs.

No wonder so many primary teachers are bewildered

The Literacy Task Force report will show how – for less than £20 million a year over 4 years, a sum which can easily be contained within present levels of education expenditure – all 190,000 primary teachers could be enabled to teach reading in accordance with internationally tried and tested best practice.

The most powerful exemplars are to be found in United States, Australia and New Zealand. The Success for All project run by Bob Slavin from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore uses upbeat, fast-paced teaching of the whole class. Children are systematically taught phonics. Smaller groups are also used to reinforce the message. The central principles which underpin Slavin's programme are clear: prevention is better than cure; intervention should be early and intensive (which demands that pupils are regularly assessed), a belief that every student can succeed; and a relentless determination to pursue the agreed approach.

This, and a similarly successful programme in Victoria, Australia demonstrate that radical improvements in literacy standards are possible. We now need to apply these lessons strategically in all 20,000 primary schools in England. New Zealand has come closest to achieving this goal. We may be able to beat them at cricket but in rugby and literacy they leave us standing. The key to their approach is to ensure that the vast majority of children – 80 per cent or more – learn to read first time through being taught properly. Through an intensive but brief period of one-to-one teaching for those who have failed behind at age six – an approach called reading recovery – a further fifteen per cent learn to read. The remaining 5 per cent, many of whom have severe learning difficulties, have the support of an individual learning plan and many of these, too, will learn to read ultimately.

Once best practice has been adopted across the country as the Task Force proposes, Reading Recovery will make sense here too, especially if it can become more cost effective.

The proposals, to be published on Thursday, blend the international experience with the best work here. On that firm foundation we propose a programme of training which will enable every primary teacher to use the most effective methods. As standards of literacy rise, primary teachers will gain the respect from the public that their work deserves. The first step towards the transformation of standards is believing we can do it. The evidence proves we can.

Professor Michael Barber of the Institute of Education, London University, is Chairman of the Literacy Task Force.



To deny that some are brighter than others, and that it's predictable from our genes, is to deny Darwinism

What your genes reveal about you

Nature and nurture is not an either/or issue, says Richard Dawkins

Polly Toynbee is my hero, a journalistic knight in shining armour. To tone down the metaphor, she can usually be relied upon to hit any nail squarely on the head. But nobody is perfect, and even the best-placed and best-intentioned thumb occasionally sports a bruise. Her column last Thursday, "The nature of our DNA will always lag behind nurture", must not have been without correction, and I offer it in a spirit of pained admiration.

Owing to some weird editorial practice of the newspaper, we did not have space to write our own headings, so Polly Toynbee can not be blamed for: "Genes testing is pointless. Our fates are more likely to be shaped by our postcodes". Nevertheless, it is an accurate reflection of what she wrote.

But even if the postcode remark were true, gene testing wouldn't be pointless. Insurance actuaries would still want to read our genes, just as they record our smoking habits though the link between smoking and disease is statistical, not absolute. Both genes and smoking contribute to your risk. Nature and nurture are not competitions such that one wins and the other loses.

She gives the game away when she misuses the word "predictor": "Even those genes that show a strong disposition to specific conditions such as heart disease are not predictors. If those who know they are in danger eschew a diet of fried Mars bars they will not die of heart disease."

But we can simultaneously say, without contradiction: Even those environmental factors that show a strong disposition to specific conditions such as heart disease are not predictors. If you are fortunate in your genes you can eat Mars bars all day and you won't die of heart disease.

Both diet and genes contribute to the probability of heart disease. So do other factors such as stress. In the real world, prediction means statistical prediction, prediction of probability. When a tipster recommends a particular horse, he weights up the past form of all the horses, adding in rumours and stable lad gossip, together with expectations about the "going" (which in turn depend upon statistical weather forecasts). The result is a probability. On average you'll win more by following a good tipster than by betting completely at random.

When a successful racehorse is sold for stud, his purchaser is betting (lots of) money on a statistical prediction about the horse's genes. If there never had been genes for racing ability in horses, there wouldn't be a separate breed of racehorse at all. By analogy, there wouldn't be separate breeds of trotting horses, carthorse polo ponies, sheepdogs, gundogs or fighting bulls.

From Shylock to the Scot Rifkind

Anti-semitism is a slippery thing, at home or abroad, says Paul Vallely

Some news reports register intellectually. Others hit the stomach with a thud. When I heard that a leading German newspaper had referred to the British Foreign Secretary as "the Jew Rifkind" I felt it viscerally.

It's a slippery thing, anti-Semitism, not least so for those of us who are not Jewish. There are two intermingled issues: a straightforward one of prejudice and a more intangible one of mere awareness – people seem to divide into those who notice whether someone is Jewish or not and those who are largely blind to the fact. Perhaps nations do too.

Until this row broke most members of the public asked to describe Malcolm Rifkind would have said he was a posh Scot. For the majority Jewishness would not have come into it. Suddenly,

with three words in the leading conservative daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, powerful late emotions have been stirred.

Conservatives may once have shouted "Shylock" at Disraeli but some of the most powerful British advocates in recent times for Zionism have been right-wing Conservatives. And Mrs Thatcher, who was said to have had more Etonians than Etonians in her Cabinet, was according to Nigel Lawson's memoirs, "without the faintest

trace of anti-Semitism in her make-up". Yet there was quite a stir when

The Sunday Telegraph ran an investigation into the Jews in the Thatcher administration. And Alan Clark's *Diaries* revealed talk at eminent Tory tables about there being "too many Jews" in the Thatcher Cabinet. Others report continuing remarks in high Tory circles today – always more in sorrow than in anger – about why neither Rifkind or Howard could ever become party leader.

The fact is that any mere statement on race is never mere. Just to speak some things aloud invites inferences about divided loyalties and much else. The line between prejudice and political correctness is sometimes a hard one to pick.

Many German commentators insist this is a fuss about nothing.

the commentators

Could you please not repeat the question?

1. Have you noticed that newspapers used to commission and print opinion poll results the whole time, but that even in advance of the coming election there don't seem to be any?
 No, I hadn't.
 Yes, I had.
 Yes, and isn't it wonderful to be spared?

2. For instance, the Wirral South by-election is only days away but nobody seems to have delayed us with the usual poll soundings. We have had so far is the rough findings of canvassers and a defiant shake of the white flag from "Dr" Brian Mawhinney. But no polls. Why not, do you think?

Because the polls got it so wrong at the last election that the papers don't want to burn their fingers again.
 Because the polls got it right at the last election and then people changed their minds after reading the poll results and before voting, thus making it look as if the polls were wrong.
 Because Tory papers are sick of Blair being so far ahead all the time and would rather not even print the polls.

Because the papers have finally tumbled to the fact that polls are not news and nobody gives a toss about them.

3. The absence of polls is very curious because the British have always loved indulging in speculation. Politicians are always being asked how they think the vote will go. The public is always wasting its money phoning in to vote on matters they cannot possibly affect. Cricketers and football managers are always being asked to predict the result of fixtures. The Lottery is all about forecasting things, and so are football pools and astrology, and so are all those programmes on BBC which show the build-up to Five Nations rugby internationals, although that might be a bit different, because international rugby is about the only sport that the BBC has still got hold of, so they have to milk it dry until everyone is bored silly, but the question remains: Although we still love speculation, have we actually got fed up with polls themselves?

Yes.
 No.
 No, it's not.
 Who cares if he is Jewish?
 Except those people who are already puzzled by his strangulated Scottish accent.
 Except those people who miss Rabbi Hugo Gryn on Radio 4 very much and think of Malcolm Rifkind as a pretty poor Jewish replacement.

8. Hmm ... To sum up, then – do you think polls are a good or bad thing?

There you go again.
 Asking extricably simple-minded questions.
 The answer is that, like most things, polls can be good or bad.
 It all depends on the context.
 But of course you can't get a good headline out of a statement beginning "It all depends..."
 Which may be why polls are not much in evidence these days.

9. Because, far from being too simple for us, they are actually too sophisticated for most voters.

10. If you agree, phone Yes. If you disagree, phone No. Line. If you don't know what this is all about, wait till the election comes along and serve you right.



Miles Kingston

And Gordon Brown doesn't?

11. Why hasn't Michael Howard sued *Private Eye* for accusing him of being a lunatic?

12. If Mr Major says that devolution would betray 1,000 years of history, how does he account for the fact that Scotland was independent for most of the period, and what does this tell us about Major's grasp of history?

13. Does it matter if Malcolm Rifkind is Jewish or not ... ?

7. Hold on, hold on. This Malcolm Rifkind business is very serious, is it not?

14. Who cares if he is Jewish?

15. Except those people who are already puzzled by his strangulated Scottish accent.

16. Except those people who miss Rabbi Hugo Gryn on Radio 4 very much and think of Malcolm Rifkind as a pretty poor Jewish replacement.

8. Hmm ... To sum up, then – do you think polls are a good or bad thing?

There you go again.

Asking extricably simple-minded questions.

17. The answer is that, like most things, polls can be good or bad.

18. It all depends on the context.

19. But of course you can't get a good headline out of a statement beginning "It all depends..."

20. Which may be why polls are not much in evidence these days.

21. Because, far from being too simple for us, they are actually too sophisticated for most voters.

22. If you agree, phone Yes. If you disagree, phone No. Line. If you don't know what this is all about, wait till the election comes along and serve you right.

HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE OVER 50

CONSULT THE RIGHT SPECIALIST

SAGA Services Ltd

The SAGA Private Healthcare plan Extensive medical cover from only £5.31 a week

Developed exclusively for people aged 50 and over, SAGA Private Healthcare provides extensive medical cover at a price you may find surprisingly affordable.

✓ Full cover for in-patient treatment, plus Surgeons' and Anaesthetists' fees*

✓ Immediate 30% no claims discount rising to 50% after only 4 claim-free years

✓ Medical conditions that occurred before you join may be covered after 2 years*

✓ Guaranteed acceptance from age 50 with no upper age limit and no medical examination required

✓ Tax relief on your premiums, if you are aged 60 and over

✓ FREE pair of "his and hers" wristwatches when you enrol

*Subject to policy conditions

SAGA Private Healthcare is underwritten by Prime Health

For a free quotation and information pack, phone our dedicated Customer Care Team at Prime Health

01483 553 553

EXT.M48002WW

SAGA Services Ltd

Saga Services Ltd would like to send you information about other Saga products and services and may pass on your details to other Saga companies for this purpose.

obituaries / gazette

Frank Launder

Many of Britain's finest films, including *The Lady Vanishes*, *Millions Like Us*, *The Happiest Days of My Life* and *The Belles of St Trinians* bear the name of Frank Launder as writer, producer or director.

For most of his career his name was teamed with that of Sidney Gilliat, both men producing and writing together, but usually directing alone, they had an acute affinity for portraying the British sensibility, and Launder had a special skill (acknowledged by Gilliat) for comedy characterisation and droll wit.

Born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire in 1907, he turned to acting after a brief spell as a clerk, joining a repertory company in Brighton. Before the age of 21 he had written two plays, one of which was seen in Brighton by a film executive, who offered Launder work at Elstree Studios as a title writer for silent films, starting with *Cocktail* (1928). His first talkie was an adaptation of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1929), on which the literary advisor was Sidney Gilliat.

The two men became a team in 1933 when they co-scripted with Clifford Grey *Facing the Music*, a bright comedy with songs starring Jose Collins and Stanley Lupino. He and Gilliat decided

to stay together as a team – the volatile Launder and practical Gilliat complemented each other well – and in 1936 had a success with a lively train thriller *Seven Sinners*, in which Edmund Lowe and Constance Cummings amusingly track down a gang who have staged a train wreck to disguise a murder.

Later the team scripted one of the best train films of all time, Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). Adapted from Ethel Lina White's novel, *The Wheel Spins*, this superb mixture of suspense, mystery and humour is an acknowledged classic for which the writing team came up with two original characters, Charters and Caldicott (played by Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne), upper-class Englishmen more interested in Test Match results than the spies and murderers surrounding them. So successful were the pair that the writers incorporated them into several later films, including another highly enjoyable train thriller, *Carol Reed's Night Train to Munich* (1940) and the first two that Launder and Gilliat co-directed, *Partners in Crime* (1942, a short) and their first feature, *Millions Like Us* (1943). Financed by the Ministry of Information as wartime propaganda, the latter became in

Launder's hands a trenchant and moving study of factory life and the disparate classes that wartime work brings together.

Though continuing to write and produce as a team, the two men then decided to direct separately. Launder's first being *2,000 Women* (1944), a melodramatic but entertaining story set in an internment camp for women in occupied France. In 1945 Launder and Gilliat set up their own production company, Individual Pictures, and the following year produced Gilliat's fine hospital thriller *Green for Danger* and Launder's *I See A Dark Stranger* (1946), a delightfully quirky comedy-thriller about an Irish girl (Deborah Kerr) who initially hates the British and thus is easily manipulated by German spies. Like most Launder-Gilliat films it made supreme use of Britain's gallery of fine character actors such as Raymond Huntley, whose Nazi here was a more sinister one than the secretly dastardly one he had memorably etched in the earlier *Night Train to Munich*.

Launder's *Captain Boycott* (1947) and *The Blue Lagoon* (1948) were only moderately successful, but in 1950 he directed a comic masterpiece, the hilarious *The Happiest Days of Your Life*. Launder had always displayed a particular flair for indigenous comedy – he wrote the original story for the Will Hay classic *Oh Mr Porte* (1937), screenplays for such comics as Max Miller and Monty Banks, and co-scripted two delightful "Inspector Hornleigh" films for Gordon Harker and Alastair Sim – and this adaptation of John Dighton's hit play about a ministerial error which results in a girl's school being billeted at an all-boys establishment, was skilfully opened out for the screen (it was filmed at Byculla School in Hampshire) and benefited from the inspired

casting of Margaret Rutherford (who had created her role on stage) and Alastair Sim as the respective heads, and such stalwarts as Joyce Grenfell, Richard Wattis and Guy Middleton as teachers. Sim and Rutherford, both celebrated scene-stealers, were perfectly matched, critic Paul Hall commenting:

The result of this contest is happily a draw... The whole thing ends in a shambles of giggles with headmaster Sim wanting his exasperation as a solo act but actress Rutherford looking like Queen Boadicea at a difficult dress fitting.

Launder now concentrated entirely on film comedy, *Lady Godiva Rides Again* (1952), a satire on the beauty-queen business, was enlivened by its grand team of cameo performers, including Sim, Kay Kendall, Dora Bryan, George Cole and Renée Houston, and *Folly to be Wise* (1952) starring Sim as the chair-

man of a "brains trust" also had its surprisingly uneven script (by Launder and Dighton) from a play by James Bridie) bolstered by skilled performances.

Next came *The Belles of St Trinians* (1954), launching a series of films with which Launder will forever be associated (and all of which he directed). With Alastair Sim in the dual role of a shady bookie and a school headmistress, and George Cole, Joyce Grenfell, Beryl Reid, Irene Handl and Joan Sims among those in support, this outrageously farcical tale was enormously successful and led to four sequels, none equaling the inspired lunacy of the original – the best is *The Great St Trinians Train Robbery* (1956).

Like Sim, George Cole was a regular player in Launder and Gilliat productions, later commenting that their films always meant "good scripts but terrible

money. If Alastair was in the film it was even worse because he got most of it. But they were wonderful people to work with."

Launder's later films also included two engaging comedies set partly in Scotland, *Green* (1955), starring Bill Travers as a hammer-thrower in the Olympics, and *The Bridal Path* (1959). After *The Wildcats of St Trinians* (1959), which was poorly received, Launder retired to France with his second wife, the actress Bernadette O'Farrell, though a few years later he re-united with Gilliat (who was to die in 1994) to present a season of their films on Channel 4.

Tom Vallance

Frank Launder, scriptwriter and film director; born Hitchin, Hertfordshire, 1907; twice married (one son, three daughters); died Monte Carlo, Monaco 23 February 1997.

Cook: the perfect collector



Cook: the perfect collector

was the writer and publisher Michael Sadler, as well as "the biblio-boys", as he called them". John Carter and Percy Muir. He bought and sold two Sadler collections, and was working on the third when he died.

To be an artist was his early ambition; perhaps his latent late ambition was to be a bookseller. Or rather, to be associated with booksellers and bookselling, which he was able to do, and share information on

equal terms with bibliographers and writers whose works he knew intimately. After all, Michael Sadler was also a creator and seller of book collections as well as a bibliographer. Perhaps it was most fitting that the bibliographical work that was most complete – on *Edwin Drood* – saw light of day in a bookseller's catalogue based on Cook's own collection, with an introduction by him.

Grenville Cook was a round Pickwickian character, softly spoken and gently smiling in every way. In his later years he suffered a lot from the side-effects of diabetes, which wore him out, but with the help of his partner Emily Oxboorow, never down and out. His collecting continued until the end. He was, in short, the perfect collector.

Brian Lake

John Charles Grenville Cook, magician, artist, planner and book-collector; born London 10 November 1919; died Watford, Hertfordshire 25 January 1997.

Grenville Cook

"Collecting" can be a sterile, simply acquisitive thing. For Grenville Cook, this was never the case. Books were his passion, but not for him the mad accumulation which can fill a house with unread volumes. Books were to be read, researched, described – accumulated, yes, but only until the passion was spent, the books sold, and a new affair begun with a new author (or, sometimes, an old author revisited).

He was born exactly one year after the end of the Great War, at Chiswick House (then a nursing home). Diagnosed as chronically diabetic early in his life, he was among the first to be treated with insulin. Before he was 20, two strands of his life were in place – working at Hamleys in 1938 inspired him to take up conjuring (he later joined the Magic Circle), and at the outbreak of war he was at Watford Art College.

Diabetes ruled out any direct involvement in the Second World War – to his disgust, even stretcher-bearing was deemed

too strenuous – and he continued art at Croydon and later Bideford, then on to the "AA", the Architectural Association, in 1944.

After the war, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Town Planning at University College London, planned great things for the capital, and Cook became part of the dream by joining the London County Council, almost by accident. He believed in the pre-eminence of the arts, would have liked to be a painter and felt that his socialist idealism combined with his knowledge of architecture could contribute in a practical way to the rebuilding and improvement of London. He became a planner, working on the old "CDAs" (Comprehensive Redevelopment Areas), such as those set up in Finsbury and Stepney. It seemed the right thing to do at the time, but by the late 1960s large-scale, wholesale, demolition and redevelopment, under the control of what had by now become the Greater London Council, was

being questioned.

Cook was the senior development control officer for Covent Garden, before and after the move of the fruit and vegetable market to Nine Elms in 1974. Initially he was the main defender of the scheme hatched up by the GLC and a group of favoured developers to raze the area to the ground, to be replaced by an Alpaville of spectacular tower blocks and sunken roads. He became chief *beau rôle* of the Covent Garden Community Association, who fought successfully to end comprehensive development; a Conservative government was forced to stop a Conservative GLC's plans by spot-listing scores of buildings. With years of work in the waste-paper basket, Cook worked until his retirement in 1983 on refurbishment, rehousing and economic revival in Covent Garden.

During all this time, he also collected books. His first passion was for Somerset Maugham, a passion that demanded completeness, a completeness that

made his collection invaluable to the bibliographer – in Maugham's case, Raymond Toole Stott, whose bibliography, *The Writings of William Somerset Maugham*, was published in 1956 (a revised edition appeared in 1973).

Cook intended to write a biography of Maugham, but was overtaken by Ted Morgan. This proved to be a precedent: most of Cook's research, often painstakingly undertaken, and in great depth, was never published under his own name, but often gratefully used by others. He bought, and sold, two Maugham collections: Kingsley Amis, Graham Greene, L.P. Hartley, Charles Causley all came and went.

In the 19th century, his main collecting interest was Dickens, and in particular the literature surrounding Dickens's unfinished last novel *Edwin Drood*.

His substantial bibliographical research was again uncompleted, but is being continued by William Oliver.

Cook's bibliographical hero

ten persuaded reluctant owners, such as Stavros Niarchos, to open their doors.

This engaging literary style was the expression of an exceptionally warm and sympathetic personality which won friends of all ages on both sides of the Atlantic who will miss the hospitality of "Hayward's Hotel". With a mind capable of grasping the essentials of every issue, energy, judgement, as well as charm, she was ideally qualified to serve on the committees of the organisations closest to her heart – the Georgian Group, the Attingham Trust, and the Silver Collectors and Furniture History Societies. These never allowed her to retire, and right up to the end called on her for advice, ideas and engagements.

She died at home, attended by her son and daughter, surrounded by the works of art she

and John had collected and from which they had both learnt so much. Her enthusiasm for fine houses and their contents never dimmed and, even when she was in the final stages of cancer, a reading from John Cornforth's description of Clarence House, or Nancy Lancaster's memories of Kelmarsh Hall would raise her spirits. She faced death with exemplary courage, and was in no way depressed by it, perhaps because she knew she had lived life to the full and that her mission to communicate her love of art was well and truly accomplished.

Diana Scarisbrick

Joyce Helena Linton, born Eton, Berkshire 18 September 1914; married 1939 John Hayward (deceased: one son, one daughter); died London 17 February 1997.



Hayward: furniture studies

ria and Albert Museum and then at Sotheby's as an international authority on the Renaissance goldsmiths and arms and armour – introduced her to the art world. They shared a liking for good food and drink, collecting works of art and foreign travel. They thus regarded not just as an opportunity to study art and architecture but also as a means of perfecting their French, German and Italian.

Their rule on these annual expeditions was to read only the literature of the country they were visiting and to talk to each other in the same language. As a result of this training she became a brilliant conversationalist, with a command of French, German and Italian that was to stand her in good stead when guiding students around foreign collections. Since she could write as well as she talked, her letters of

and John had collected and from which they had both learnt so much. Her enthusiasm for fine houses and their contents never dimmed and, even when she was in the final stages of cancer, a reading from John Cornforth's description of Clarence House, or Nancy Lancaster's memories of Kelmarsh Hall would raise her spirits. She faced death with exemplary courage, and was in no way depressed by it, perhaps because she knew she had lived life to the full and that her mission to communicate her love of art was well and truly accomplished.

Diana Scarisbrick

Joyce Helena Linton, born Eton, Berkshire 18 September 1914; married 1939 John Hayward (deceased: one son, one daughter); died London 17 February 1997.

and Albert Museum and then at Sotheby's as an international authority on the Renaissance goldsmiths and arms and armour – introduced her to the art world. They shared a liking for good food and drink, collecting works of art and foreign travel. They thus regarded not just as an opportunity to study art and architecture but also as a means of perfecting their French, German and Italian.

Their rule on these annual

Antonio de Almeida

Antonio (Tony) de Almeida was one of the most complete musicians of his age. While he will be remembered by many for his distinguished conducting career in the opera house and concert halls of the world and for his many recordings, he would have been equally happy to know that his name would survive him as the author of an as yet unpublished work of musical scholarship on the music of the composer Jacques Offenbach.

Almeida was born in Paris in 1928, the son of Baron Antonio de Almeida Santos, a Portuguese aristocrat, and his American wife Barbara Tupper de Almeida. His godfather was the pianist Artur Rubinstein. As a schoolboy he distinguished himself academically and showed great musical talent.

Despite having a period of studying musicology with Alberto Ginastera in Argentina, his talents were so broadly based that, while undecided about a future career, he obtained a full scholarship to study nuclear physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He took up only briefly before he was encouraged by Rubinstein to pursue his musical interests, and he transferred in Yale University where he studied musical theory under Paul Hindemith and conducting under Serge Koussevitzky and Georg Szell.

After completing his studies, Almeida's first work was with Portuguese radio in Lisbon in 1949, and shortly afterwards he gained his first post as musical director with the Oporto Symphony Orchestra. Later he often related a story of a highlight of his time in Oporto. Sir Thomas Beecham was invited as a guest conductor. He was met on arrival by Almeida and informed him of his hopes as to the quality of the orchestra which he would not be able to judge for himself as he was stone deaf after a flight in an unpressurised plane.

There are no reports of the success of the concert, but Almeida made such an impression on the great man that, a year later, he was invited by Beecham to make his debut in London with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He made the most of this opportunity and others that quickly followed with Leonard Bernstein in New York to establish himself as one of the leading young conductors.

Several positions as musical director and chief conductor followed: Portuguese radio from 1957 to 1960, the Stuttgart Philharmonic from 1962 to 1964 and the Paris Opera from 1965 to 1967. He was appointed guest conductor of the Houston Symphony in 1969. During this time he also guested with many of the principal orchestras of Europe and America working regularly in concert and the recording studio with the Philharmonic and the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

Despite his Portuguese/American parentage, Almeida declared his nationality to be French and he remained a citizen of France all his life. He became recognised as one of the leading authorities on French music of the 19th and 20th centuries and did much to promote interest in it around the world. In 1976 he was appointed Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur and later was made a Commandeur of the same order by President Mitterrand. In 1996 he was elected a Commandeur des Arts et Lettres.

While conducting was the work by which Almeida was known to a wide public, he

fore going to live in Florida. Returned in 1982 during the civil war to run for president as the candidate of the rightist National Liberation Movement, and claimed to have won the election, but officials declared General Anibal Guevara Rodriguez the winner.

Colonel Enrique Peralta Azuara, military leader, died Guatemala City 19 February, aged 88. As defence minister in 1963, headed a coup that overthrew General Miguel Ydígoras. In 1966 oversaw civilian elections, turning over power to Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro before

President Virgil Pomfret

Antonio Jacques de Almeida, conductor and musicologist; born Paris 20 January 1928; married 1953 Lynn Erdmann (two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved) died Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 18 February 1997.

Colonel Enrique Peralta Azuara, military leader, died Guatemala City 19 February, aged 88. As defence minister in 1963, headed a coup that overthrew General Miguel Ydígoras. In 1966 oversaw civilian elections, turning over power to Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro before

President Virgil Pomfret

Antonio Jacques de Almeida, conductor and musicologist; born Paris 20 January 1928; married 1953 Lynn Erdmann (two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved) died Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 18 February 1997.

Colonel Enrique Peralta Azuara, military leader, died Guatemala City 19 February, aged 88. As defence minister in 1963, headed a coup that overthrew General Miguel Ydígoras. In 1966 oversaw civilian elections, turning over power to Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro before

President Virgil Pomfret

Antonio Jacques de Almeida, conductor and musicologist; born Paris 20 January 1928; married 1953 Lynn Erdmann (two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved) died Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 18 February 1997.

Colonel Enrique Peralta Azuara, military leader, died Guatemala City 19 February, aged 88. As defence minister in 1963, headed a coup that overthrew General Miguel Ydígoras. In 1966 oversaw civilian elections, turning over power to Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro before

President Virgil Pomfret

Antonio Jacques de Almeida, conductor and musicologist; born Paris 20 January 1928; married 1953 Lynn Erdmann (two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved) died Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 18 February 1997.

Colonel Enrique Peralta Azuara, military leader, died Guatemala City 19 February, aged 88. As defence minister in 1963, headed a coup that overthrew General Miguel Ydígoras. In 1966 oversaw civilian elections, turning over power to Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro before

Antonio de
Almeida

Institutions left awash with cash following a flood of buy-backs

Ken Clarke, the Chancellor, may have scrapped the tax benefits attached to share buy-backs and special dividend schemes, but they remain a symbol of financial vitality in the corporate sector.

Last week alone, banking giant Barclays, advertising agency WPP, leisure conglomerate Rank Group and haulier Christian Salvesen all unveiled plans to repurchase shares worth a total of almost £1bn.

The received wisdom is that a net injection of liquidity from buy-backs is good for the stock market. Certainly share repurchases have been a significant factor behind the rise and rise of the US and, to a less obvious extent, the UK markets.

But there are signs the initial enthusiasm for buy-backs is beginning to wear thin. Shares in Barclays, for example, still fell sharply after its results last week, despite suggestions that another repurchase of its equity was on the cards.

While buy-backs are a response to the problem of what to do with surplus cash in a low interest rate environment, they are also an admission that companies can think of nothing better to do with the cash in business terms than to give it back to shareholders.

"In itself, that is not a positive message to be putting across," stockbroker Charterhouse Tilney argues in its latest review.

The involuntary increase in liquidity comes at a time when institutions are already awash with cash – double the normal proportion of total assets, Charterhouse says.

Some of this should be moppped up by imminent building society and mutual assurance flotation, while cash-strapped companies may come in hand to take advantage of available liquidity through rights issues.

That said, government funding, through tapping the gilt market, is falling as the public

sector borrowing requirement improves, leaving investors wondering where to park their cash.

Overall, it looks as share buy-backs in themselves do nothing to resolve the underlying problem that the return on cash is low. The prudent Charterhouse contends, is merely transferred to fund managers.

Whether this will see more buy-backs announced remains to be seen. What is clear is that a veritable spring tide of company results, led by financials, will engulf investors this week but with the London stock market testing its record high-water tide-mark any disappointment could leave shareholders high and dry.

Friday's profit-taking among financial stocks may be a foretaste of things to come.

Adverse currency factors could cause more than a few ripples of concern. Among the insurers, a buoyant life sector has lifted shares in Commercial Union to new highs in recent

weeks. But NatWest reckons CU is vulnerable to profit-taking with the shares standing at 16 per cent premium to their net asset value and vulnerable

to profits downgrades given sterling's further gains against continental currencies since the December year-end. Underlying operating profits to be unveiled on Wednesday are expected to show a fall from £509m in 1995 to anywhere between £415m and £465m.

On the same day Prudential posts its 1996 figures. While these should be perfectly acceptable – operating profit up 10 per cent to £285m – the main focus of attention will be on what the Prus has to say about its £1.9bn bid for Scottish Amicable, which rival Abbey National, reporting the next day, has promised to trump in what has become a cut and run race. ScotAm has given its var-

ious suitors until Friday to come up with their final indicative bids.

Abbey, too, should produce a double-digit improvement in profits with NatWest pencilling in £1142m (£1020m) at the pre-tax level. However, the broker believes the valuation of both shares is looking stretched after their strong performance in recent months.

Just as topical will be final results from Standard Chartered on Wednesday. The bank's prospects for earnings growth are underpinned by market conditions in Hong Kong, so its assessment of how the death of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping will affect the colony's handing over to Peking this summer will be watched with extra interest. Strong growth in Standard's core Asian franchise should ensure pre-tax profits to jump by about a third to £2875m.

Still in financial services, profits from high-street clearing

bank NatWest are set to fall by 35 per cent to around £1135m, reflecting a number of one-off factors. These include a £690m accounting loss on the disposal of Bancorp, the US commercial and retail banking arm, and a special restructuring charge of £206m to be partially offset by a £224m gain on the sale of NatWest's stake in St. the venture capital group.

The lights will finally go out on British Gas on Thursday. Its last set of results will be something of an irrelevance as the company has ceased to exist following the demerger into Centrica, the domestic and industrial gas supplier, and BG, the pipeline arm.

Assuming the opportunity is taken to wipe the slate clean

order book, rising profits from the European Airbus consortium and reduced losses from regional aircraft. Pre-tax profits should come in around £440m versus £330m last time.

The lights will finally go out on British Gas on Thursday. Its last set of results will be something of an irrelevance as the company has ceased to exist following the demerger into Centrica, the domestic and industrial gas supplier, and BG, the pipeline arm.

It will also be the end of an era for Redland today when the building materials group is ejected from the FTSE 100 index. It will be replaced by Energy Group, one of the businesses born of the Hanson demerger which includes Eastern, the regional electricity company. The Hanson rump will remain a FTSE 100 constituent.

STOCK MARKET WEEK
PATRICK TOOHER



British Aerospace

British Aerospace has been a consistent success story in the last year, with its shares rising from 1000p to 1500p. The company's performance has been driven by strong sales in its defence and aerospace divisions, as well as its recent acquisition of the British subsidiary of the US defence contractor Boeing. The company's financials are impressive, with a strong backlog of orders and a healthy cash position. The company's future prospects are positive, with continued growth expected in its defence and aerospace divisions.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: r = rights x = dividend A = ADRs u = United Securities Market S = Suspended

Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0801 223 328, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code preceded next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0801 223 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 – Real-time
UK Stock Market Report 00 Starting Rates 04 Prudential Issues 35
UK Company News 01 Bullion Report 05 Water Shares 39
Foreign Exchange 02 Wall St Report 20 Electricity Shares 40
03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Banks 41

Anytime with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of The Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0801 223 333.

For assistance call our helpline 071 673 4378 (1000am - 500pm).

Calls cost 30p per minute. Call charges include VAT

Interest Rates

UK	Rate	800%	Germany	Discount	250%	US	Prime	100%	Japan
France	35%		100%	50%	50%	40%	40%	50%	50%
Intervention	35%		100%	50%	50%	40%	40%	50%	50%
Italy	Discount	75%	Discount	Discount	50%	60%	60%	75%	75%
Scandinavia	Advances	250%	Discount	Discount	82%	40%	40%	100%	100%

THE INDEPENDENT

Win a BUPA Health Screen

Plus a £30 discount for every reader

BUPA has developed a new assessment which is devised specifically to provide positive health programmes for men and women. Everyone has a comprehensive medical screen involving over 40 tests giving an overview of your all round state of health and fitness. Then you will be assigned your own personal health adviser to help plan your own improvement programmes and action plans.

0930 567 791

OR FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 0800 616029

Competition closes 30p per minute. Winner picked at random after this date 26 February 1997. Used Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

0930 567 791

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-298 2636 fax 0171-298 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

‘Windfalls will be saved not spent’

JILL TREANOR
Banking Correspondent

Only one in eight of the 19 million recipients of the £21bn worth of shares to be given away by the converting building societies will cash in their shares straightaway, subduing the “feel-good factor” and easing the mounting pressure on the Chancellor to raise interest rates.

According to a survey by Mori and analysis by Salomon Brothers, the windfalls will be

saved rather than spent and will add just 0.5 per cent to consumption rates. Those windfalls which are spent would be used for foreign holidays and home improvements, with smaller sums spent on consumer durables, cars and clothes, the survey found.

Initial forecasts from City economists had put the boost to consumption at 1.0 per cent or more, leading many to predict a boost to the feel-good factor in the run up to the general election.

While only Alliance &

Leicester will have paid out its share bonanza before the election, the others – Woolwich, Northern Rock and Halifax – follow in quick succession.

The 9 million or so members of Halifax vote today on the society’s £14bn flotation plans, which in its own provides the single biggest boost to share ownership in the UK.

The effect of the Halifax’s payout in June, when 8.5 million people will receive shares worth an average of £1,300 each, combined with the windfalls from

the other societies, has been complicating economists’ forecasts for spending, economic growth and inflation over the next year or so.

The sheer scale of the bonanza is the problem as, theoretically, if all the shares were cashed in at once, the payouts would be equivalent to a temporary 11p cut in the basic income tax rate.

If all of the windfalls are spent, adding about 40 per cent to consumption, there would be massive knock-on effects on capacity use, prices and the current accounts, the Salomon researchers said.

But the Mori poll established that, in general, the people expecting to receive windfalls were middle-aged and richer and more financially sophisticated, which suggests that a large proportion of the funds will be saved rather than spent.

The survey showed that only 12 per cent, or one in eight, of those who expect to receive a windfall would sell their shares immediately, while a similar number intended to sell their shares over the next 12 months.

But this means that only 10 to 15 per cent of the windfalls will be spent, much lower than the 25 per cent which had been used for previous estimates.

According to the Salomon analysis this suggested that current estimates of GDP growth of 3.4 per cent may now be too high and that interest rates may only need to rise by half a percentage point, rather than the 0.75 expected at the moment.

The survey results – and assuming that sterling stays around current levels – tilt the odds in favour of a total hike of 0.5 per cent, the research said.

Halifax’s special general meeting at the Sheffield Arena today is likely to see protests from disabled groups that are furious over the denial of payouts to people whose accounts are held in trust.

But even though more than 50 per cent of the society’s investing members – more than 3.3 million – must vote in favour for the flotation to proceed, such protests are unlikely to derail Halifax’s flotation plans.

DTI tries to ban former Barings directors

JILL TREANOR

Former senior directors of Barings, the bank which collapsed in 1995, face being banned from acting as company directors for up to 15 years as a result of action being taken by the Department of Trade and

Industry (DTI). A spokeswoman for the DTI said the office had issued summonses last Friday against Andrew Tuckey, the former deputy chairman of the bank, and nine other former directors including Peter Norris, the former chief executive.

The DTI is also seeking to ban Ian Hopkins, the former head of risk at Barings, and Ron Baker, the immediate boss of Nick Leeson, the trader based in Singapore who broke the bank by racking up unauthorised trading losses of more than £800m.

Leeson was jailed in Singapore in 1995 after admitting charges of fraud.

The DTI action is being taken under the Company Directors Disqualification Act, which can lead to bans from directly or indirectly forming, promoting or managing companies for 15 years.

The former directors have been the subject of disciplinary procedures by the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), the City watchdog.

Some of them, including Mr Norris, have been banned from working in the City in management roles for periods of up to three years.

But Mr Baker succeeded in fighting an attempt by the regulator to ban him after a disciplinary tribunal at the SFA cleared him of four out of five charges.



Albert Scardino: Unable to line up a new team of backers after Mercury Asset Management withdrew from the consortium's £20m bid

Photograph: Empics

Scardino pulls out of Forest bid battle

Nigel Cope

The bid battle for Nottingham

Forest became a one-horse race yesterday after the dramatic last-minute collapse of the consortium led by US journalist Albert Scardino.

His £20m bid disintegrated when his main backer, Mercury Asset Management (MAM), pulled out citing nervousness about the prospects for football shares.

MAM said it was withdrawing because of the possible deterioration of the market for

football shares over the next 18 months – a decision which could have a knock-on effect on other quoted football clubs.

With Forest looking to float, MAM said this could have jeopardised this value of its investment.

After MAM made its shock decision late on Friday evening, Mr Scardino spent the rest of the weekend trying unsuccessfully to line up replacement backers including other City institutions and Porterbrook leasing millionaire Sandy Anderson.

Mr Scardino finally conceded

defeat yesterday lunchtime, leaving the way clear for the group led by Nigel Wray, Irving Scholar and local author Phil Soar, to win shareholder approval for its £19.3m offer.

It will now be the only bid on the table when Forest shareholders meet tonight for the crunch vote to decide the future of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.

Commenting on the sudden evaporation of his deal, Mr

Scardino said: “It’s very, very disappointing but I’m proud of what we have achieved over the last six weeks.”

Mr Scardino claimed he had won backing from around 140 of Forest’s 202 shareholders, bringing himself within touching distance of the majority of the club.

However, a victory is far from a foregone conclusion as the bid needs a 75 per cent majority to win control.



GAVYN DAVIES

'Forty per cent of UK youngsters never reach NVQ Level 2 – the equivalent of five good GCSEs. The answer is to spend more money to raise the standards of this part of the population, while saving money in higher education by transforming student grants into student loans'

An economist's view of what Labour can do

There seems to be little that annoys Gordon Brown and Tony Blair more than the suggestion that nothing can be accomplished by a New Labour government without increasing the total of public spending and borrowing. Nevertheless, this seems to be widely believed by British opinion formers, which is why a book published last Monday is very helpful. The book – *What Labour Can Do* by Professor Richard Layard of the London School of Economics (LSE) – outlines a programme of major and minor reforms that would cost only the modest amount of money which could comfortably be raised by the windfall tax on privatised utilities.

The title of Professor Layard's book is highly appropriate, since the author is the epitome of "can do" economists. While much of the profession is characterised by "can't do" types, Professor Layard never analyses a problem without suggesting how it can be alleviated by feasible policy changes. His list of practical accomplishments is already legion. The Centre for Labour Economics at the LSE was established by him as the leading research grouping on the subject in Europe, and has now developed into the wider-ranging Centre for Economic Performance. Professor Layard was also the prime mover behind the launch of the Employment Institute and Charter for Jobs in the 1980s, organisations which were in the wilderness for many years, but which eventually helped change the tide of opinion on the unemployment problem in this country. After that,

Professor Layard decided that the biggest challenge faced by macro-economists lay in the transition economies, so he upped sticks and moved to Russia, to assist the process of reform. As all his colleagues will testify, perseverance is his middle name.

I first encountered Professor Layard's "can do" spirit in 1978, when I was working in Jim Callaghan's Policy Unit. We were looking for new ideas to fill the 1979 Labour Manifesto, and Professor Layard was suggesting that a job guarantee should be offered by the government to all those who had been unemployed continuously for more than 12 months. The unit felt that this would prove an important initiative, since it would raise the cost to the government of allowing long-term unemployment to rise, and would therefore force other policies across Whitehall to be adjusted to this requirement. Somewhat to our surprise, Jim Callaghan agreed, and the pledge made its first appearance in a Labour manifesto that year. It has been something of a hasty perennial since then in opposition documents, but sadly this has never persuaded the public, or the Conservative government, to support the idea. Perhaps 1997 will be the year, and if the New Labour plan eventually succeeds in eliminating long-term unemployment for those aged under 25, much of the credit should go to Professor Layard.

What Labour Can Do explains in some detail how this job guarantee can be implemented via a combination of employment subsidies and job creation projects. Also in

the area of "welfare to work", Professor Layard argues for an expansion of in-work benefits, especially Family Credit, and for a minimum wage, set at a relatively low level of perhaps £3.25 a week, designed to help roughly 5 per cent of the working population. He recognises, however, that these solutions will only work in the context of a concerted programme to improve skill levels for the least educated segment of our population. He points out that in the UK, 40 per cent of British youngsters never reach National Vocational Qualification Level 2, the equivalent of five good GCSEs. This means that we have twice the number of unqualified workers as Germany and France.

The answer is to spend more money on the population, while saving money in higher education by transforming student grants into student loans. The Labour programme called "Target 2000" could then be implemented. This would ensure that every youngster under 18 who does not have Level 2 attainment must be studying for it either full-time or part-time, implying that an extra 350,000 teenagers would be exposed to additional training. At the other end of the age range, nursery education should be available for every three- and four-year-old but nursery vouchers would disappear.

Reading the key chapters on "welfare to work" and the "skills revolution", it becomes clear that there is much work to be done

by a government which accepts that it has a social responsibility to help those who have dropped out of the education net prematurely. But by the same token, it cannot be acceptable for young people to receive benefit while refusing to take up offers of help from the State. Provided that the nature of this hardship is clearly explained to the rest of the population – that voluntary idleness at the public expense is never an option – such an initiative could generate wide electoral support.

The book also argues for modest stakeholder-type reforms to discourage the culture of short-termism and hostile takeovers which permeates British industry. These would include enhanced compensation for workers laid off after a merger, much tougher competition policy (eg making price fixing illegal), the introduction of a Council of Institutional Investors to undertake efficiency audits of underperforming firms and the like. But there would be no wholesale changes in company law, or in the duties of directors, which some supporters of the stakeholder system would like to see adopted.

On macro-economic policy, Professor Layard argues under the heading of "no more boom and bust" for a series of measures to enhance stability in the monetary and fiscal field, including independence for the Bank of England, followed immediately by first-wave membership of EMU. There would be no attempt to reduce the share of public spending or tax in GDP, since Professor Layard views this as irrelevant for growth, but

there would be a gradual privatisation of the pension system.

What are the common threads that lie behind these ideas? The first is that plenty can be done to change and improve the workings of the economy without resorting to tax and spend. The second is that we still have something to learn from the way that things are done in the rest of Europe.

This latter notion is not fashionable, especially following the recent surge in unemployment in Germany. There are serious problems with the structure of the labour market on the Continent and several of our neighbours are reluctantly moving in the direction of the Anglo-Saxon model in this area. But, as this column pointed out a few weeks ago, we should not get too mesmerised by short-term cyclical developments, since long-term comparisons between Europe, America and the UK on growth, productivity and inflation remain unflattering to our system. On this, Will Hutton makes a sensible point – we are not forced to copy all the mistakes which the Germans and French have made, but there are many elements of their system which would enhance our own.

Also we should recognise that not everything done in America need be slavishly copied in the rest of the world. Ten years ago, copying America would have been considered insane. Professor Layard suggests – controversially – that it still is.

'What Labour Can Do' by Professor Richard Layard, published by Warner Books at £19.99

Orange targets big-spending business travellers with globally mobile phone

Peter Rodgers

The Orange network is to offer a mobile phone that can be used in more than 50 countries by the end of this year, from Lithuania and Slovenia to New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

The new phones, the latest

offering in an increasingly fierce marketing war with Vodafone, have been developed with Motorola. They allow calls to be made on either of the two main types of digital network in common use, GSM1800 and GSM900, and are claimed to be the basis of the first truly international phone network.

The dual-mode Motorola phones will cost 15 to 25 per cent more than conventional models, and start at about £125. Orange claimed it would have a lead of three to four months on its competitors in introducing the dual-mode technology, which searches out the correct frequency automatically.

They are aimed at enticing big-spending business travellers away from Vodafone and Cellnet. Orange customers will receive one bill itemising calls made in any of the 50 countries.

Orange customers can now call in 10 countries and the plan is to extend this "roaming" capability to at least 24 by the end

of April, almost 40 by the end of August and more than 50 by the year-end. For the first time, British mobile phone owners will be able to use their equipment in North America.

Hans Snook, managing director of Orange, said: "This is another step in our ambition to allow our customers to use

Orange through one phone on one number at home, in the office, or abroad."

Orange now has more than 785,000 subscribers and its UK coverage has grown to 92 per cent of the population.

Forecasts for growth of the British mobile phone market were raised last month after

record figures for subscribers numbers were released by the two all-digital networks, Orange and One2One, helping Orange shares recover after a lacklustre few months.

Orange added 125,000 customers to its networks between October and December, including an encouraging Christ-

mas, its highest quarterly connections figures.

The network also grabbed 29 per cent of all new customers in the market last year, compared with 15 per cent in 1995. Orange claims to be in second place behind Vodafone, with more than 1 million digital customers, but ahead of Cellnet and One2One.

Tel: 0171 293 2222

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS

Fax: 0171 293 2505

Equipment & Supplies

Equipment & Supplies

Franchises

Franchises

THE FIRST TOSHIBA AUTHORISED DEALER SINCE 1985!

WE WILL BEAT ANY GENUINE ADVERTISED PRICE FROM ANY AUTHORISED TOSHIBA DEALER

BUDGET BUSTERS AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE SAVINGS

ADDITIONAL DISCOUNTS FOR PUBLIC SECTOR ORDERS ON SOME MODELS (LOCAL & CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, EDUC. MOD & NHS)

MASSIVE REDUCTIONS AND EVEN HIGHER SPECIFICATION MODELS

TOSHIBA

£930.00
£822.75 inc VAT

TOSHIBA

£1185.00
£992.38 inc VAT

SATELLITE 110CS/CT COLOUR NOTEBOOK

- Intel Pentium 100MHz • 8MB EDO Ram expandable to 40MB • 810MB Hard disk • 11.3" TFT/FTF colour display • 2 PCMCIA slots (2 x Type II or I x Type III).
- Parallel, serial, keyboard/mouse, VGA port • Size: 299 x 226 x 53 • Weight: 3.2kg • Windows 95 or 3.11 • 1 Year Toshiba/Gultronics Warranty

SATELLITE 200 CD-ROM COLOUR NOTEBOOK

- Intel Pentium 100MHz • 8MB EDO Ram expandable to 40MB • 810MB Hard disk • 11.3" Advanced STN/TFT colour display • 6 CD-Rom and Floppy disk drive supplied • 2 PCMCIA slots with ZV Port • Infra-red Transmission • Weight: 3.4kg • Windows 95 or 3.11 • 1 Year Toshiba/Gultronics Warranty

SATELLITE PRO 430CD/CDT COLOUR

- Intel Pentium 120MHz • 16MB EDO Ram expandable to 48MB • 1.3GB Hard disk • 11.3" DSTN/FTF colour display • 10x CD-Rom & E Drive supplied • 2 PCMCIA slots with ZV Port • Weight: 3.4kg • Win 95/3.11 • 3 Year Toshiba/Gultronics Warranty

TECRA 510CS/CDT COLOUR

- Intel Pentium 133MHz • 16MB EDO Ram expandable to 144MB • 1.35/2.16GB Hard disk • 12.1" DSTN/FTF colour (45 million colours) • 4x CD-Rom included • 2.32-bit PCMCIA slots with ZV Port • Internal AC adapter • Weight: 3.7kg • Win 95/3.11 • 3 Year Toshiba/Gultronics Warranty

TECRA 730CDT TFT COLOUR

- Intel Pentium 133MHz • 16MB EDO Ram expandable to 144MB • 2.16GB Hard disk • 12.1" TFT colour (45 million colours) • 4x CD-Rom included • 2.32-bit PCMCIA slots with ZV Port • Internal AC adapter • Weight: 3.65kg • Win 95/3.11 • 3 Year Toshiba/Gultronics Warranty

PCMCIA V.34 Fax Data Modem only £99+Vat when purchased with any Notebook!

SALES HOTLINES

0171 436 3131
0171 323 4612

GOVERNMENT, EDUCATIONAL, CORPORATE & MAIL ORDER ENQUIRIES

217-218 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON W1P 9AF
FAX 0171-636 1075

GULTRONICS
The Notebook Specialist

start-up guide

Page 18 shows you how.

NetWest's comprehensive Business Start-Up Guide covers many of the things you should consider before going it alone. Everything from writing a business plan to insurance and legal considerations.

Call 0800 777 888

For your free copy, fill in the coupon or call us on 0800 777 888.

Better still, why not contact your local Small Business Advisor? With at least one in every High Street branch, you've never been closer to your local business.

Please send me my NetWest Business Start-Up Guide. Fill in the coupon or return to: NetWest Small Business Services, FREEPOST, Hounslow, TW4 4ER.

Name/Ms/Ms/Ms

Initials

Surname

Address

Postcode

Ref. No. 98488

NATWEST
More than just a bank

National Westminster Bank Plc, 41 Lombard, London EC2P 2BP. Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and the Financial Services Authority. Member of the NatWest Life and NatWest Unit Trust Marketing Group, advising on life insurance, pensions and unit trust products of their Marketing Group.

Calls with NatWest may be monitored/recorded to maintain and improve our service.

Services

Fidelity DIGITAL Colour

SAME DAY FULL COLOUR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY & PRINTING

FROM PHOTO SHOT TO PRINT IN 15 HOURS

01268 544066

SMALL FINANCE COMPANY

providing loans for income generation, additional finance to further your business. Minimum investment £3,000. Return of capital Subsidised income to be paid over 3 years plus a small annual service charge.

Tel: 01545 651129

Opportunities

£364 extra

Average weekly profits last 2 years
'the most enjoyable profit I've ever made'

- Just 1 hour each Saturday
- No stock, no selling
- Operate anywhere
- Not MLM or franchise
- Total capital investment £3,995

01452 532415 24 hrs, 7 days

Prime Analysis (Europe) Limited

the back page

Monday 24 February 1997 the week starts here

Pick 'n' mix

Theatre: If Mark Rennhills play 'Shopping And Fucking' left you Hopping and Clucking, best stay away from his new one. For the rest of us, 'Faust', opening tomorrow at the Lyric Studio in Hammersmith, promises to be a quite stunning show, mixing video and French philosopher Michel Foucault's musings with big ideas about God and man. Tickets are still available for every performance, but are going fast. Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat matinée 4.30pm. Mon £5, Tues-Sat £8.50. £3 conc. Box office: 0181-741 2311.

B there

Film: Tim Burton rescues alarmist alien movie from the B-list with Mars Attacks - a spoof on the hysterical behaviour of Hollywood's finest (the cast includes Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close and



Katharine Hamnett

Still provoking in her fashion



Adam Mars-Jones

reviews Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady*



Marriage

New ways to mend it

Danny DeVito) as an alien invasion terrorises the planet. At cinemas nationwide from Friday.

No contest
Opera: If you're torn between Jonathan Miller's current Coel fan Tutti or his Der Rosenkavalier, both running in London at the moment, just make sure you get to both. But hurry - the latter finishes at the London Coliseum on Saturday. A wonderful cast, including John Tomlinson and Yvonne Kenny, gives a sumptuous evocation of 19th-century Vienna. 5.30pm. Tickets £8-£40. Box office: 071-632 8300.

Baroque and roll
Classical: Start your week in style tonight with Handel, a composer who never goes out of fashion, sung and played by the best exponents of his art - Anne Murray and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Queen Elizabeth Hall, London SE1, 7.45pm. Tickets £8-£20. Box office: 0171-960 4242.

Never mind the buttocks
Pop: Don't miss the annual pop back-slapping ceremony - the Brit Awards - tonight on ITV at 8pm. Delight suffused the press room and homes across the land last year after Jarvis Cocker's headline-grabbing antics. Possible winners include newcomers Kula Shaker, the Spice Girls (surprise, surprise), dance act the Prodigy and production wizard Tricky. This year's live performance, thankfully free of preposterous pseudodieties, will be a duet by Diana Ross and Jamiroquai's Jay.

Reel heroines
Festival: Strong and sassy women feature throughout Witty Women of Hollywood, the National Film Theatre festival of comedy in March. Stars include Alicia Silverstone, Marilyn Monroe, Whoopi Goldberg and Mae

West - fast-talking women whose zappy dialogue did anything but dilute their sex appeal. Tickets are selling fast. NFT, London SE1. Box office: 0171-928 3232.

Corking caper

Buying: Sotheby's first Formula One memorabilia auction on Wednesday offers an update on what happened to Damon Hill's victory champagne bottle (opened) when he became the world's best racing driver last year. 2.30pm.

Rhyme or reason

Travel (1): Hear creativity among the crescents at Bath's third literary festival. Today's offering includes Beryl Bainbridge and Jonathan Coe in discussion. The rest of the week mixes poetry and music. Box office: 01225 463362.

Travel (2 Jar): Otherwise, you could get your priorities right and go on holiday. For more sun and less semantics buy 14 nights in Barbados, departing on the 25th from Gatwick, for just £569. Call Page & May 016 250 7116.

Half and half

Jazz performance: Only a few tickets remain for A Slow Drag, the true-life story of

Porchester Centre, London W2, 7-9pm. Call Roger on 0181-860 3994.

Vanishing breed

Remind yourself of that shrinking band of building societies that remain under mutual status with today's

special general meeting at the Sheffield Arena to decide the Halifax Building Society's future.

65 and counting

The Government looks to be facing ritual defeat in the Wirral South by-election on Thursday, followed by exchanges as predictable as a church service. 'Mid-term protest' Stephen Dorrell will say. 'Ringling endorsement of New Labour', Tony Blair will reply.

The rest of us get our chance for an 'Amen' (or not) on 1 May, now only 65 days away.

Hard reign

Theatre: Can anyone recall a woman playing the part of King Lear in a major British theatre? What's more, a woman best known for mimicry? Enter Kathryn Hunter, star of Theatre de Complicite, who takes the lead at the Haymarket Theatre Leicester. Until 15 March. Tickets £8-£12.50 Tues-Thur. £6-£14.50 Fri-Sat. Box office: 0116 253 9797.

Research: James Aufenst, Graeme Hehir

jazz musician Billy Tipton - he who was actually a she - played out by musicians and actors at the Freedom Café, Wardour St, London W1. Tickets £6-£9. 8pm Tuesday and Thursday; 6 and 9pm Fri-Sat. Until 15 March.

Best medicine

Comedy: You've got to laugh, or at least pretend to.

Contestants bid to be New Comedy Act of the Year at the Hackney Empire, London E8, on Saturday. Mark Lamarr hosts the grand final of an event previously won by David Baddiel. Tickets £5. 8pm. Box office: 0181-985 2424.

Take the plunge
Sport: Immerse yourself in a free 'dive' with the Sea Urchin club on Thursday. It's your last chance to submerge gratis, but if you like it, you might fancy following them to the south coast at the weekend. Learn to breathe through a tube at the



DENIS CHAPOULIE

The Zagat survey of London restaurants nominates The Two Brothers in Finchley as "best fish and chip restaurant in the metropolis". The Two Bs takes no bookings, is closed on Sundays and Mondays - "you can't buy decent fish on a Monday so why sell it?" And when I rang to ask how to get there and how long I might have to wait, one of the brothers said "just north of the North Circular Road and you have to be really unlucky not to get a table in 20 minutes".

They are at 279 Regent's Park Road, N1. Mrs

Thatcher's old constituency; the queue was massive but the turnover fast. We were served within 25 minutes of arrival and drank a glass of wine while we waited.

The first thing you notice is that it does not smell like a fish and chip restaurant and it is nicely lit and carpeted with good taste; then it occurs to you that the average age of the clientele is just short of deceased - though some bring grown-up great-grandchildren. The owners kiss nearly everyone who comes in; it is a wholly agreeable establishment and as good a fish and chipper as you will encounter: best Maris Piper potatoes fried in clear ground nut oil; fine Arbroath smokies at under £5 a plate; poached Pacific salmon (with hollandaise sauce) that weighs in at 14 ounces; and what is particularly endearing is that when you order six oysters, they bring you seven. Do not miss the bread and butter pudding, nor the white house wine which costs £8, comes from the Côte de Duras and is a felicitous companion to fried fillet of haddock. The staff is keen and professional and the only thing I would change is the butter, which comes in small gold-paper packets.

Dance: Where would you go to see Scottish Ballet's stunning 'Le Spectre', award-winning choreographer Philippe Decoufle's surreal 'Decodex' and 'A Chorus Line', the most successful musical in the history of Broadway? Paris, perhaps? New York? No - well, not in the next few weeks. Get yourself to the Surrey hinterland instead. The Woking International Dance Festival Umbrella showcased talent from around the globe in 1995, and promises an impressively diverse, quality line-up in the second of these biennial events, starting tomorrow. In the words of our critic, it is "essential viewing". Box office: 01483 761144.

thought and does not want you to forget him.

Hoteliers believe that what persuades people to come back is the depth of their carpets, the quality of their service and the profusion of toiletries they give away. For me, it is the welcome I receive and the overall atmosphere.

Tonight I shall book into the Scarsbrick Hotel in Southport and if things are as they have been for the last five years there will be several dozen ladies and gentlemen standing around the entrance waving banners, making obscene gestures and shouting "murderer" as I make my way up the stairs to the swing doors. The reason for my presence is the Waterloo Cup, British coursing's premier event, which is held in the fields of Lancashire over the next three days. To the anti-blood sports lobby this is as unmissable an occasion as the Schoolboys' Exhibition is to paedophiles. I write about the "cup" annually for Sporting Life; the antics of the "ants" and Lancashire Constabulary's marshalling of their demos are the hottest things on show. For the rest, fast dogs chase, and usually fail to catch, cunning hares. What else is new?

Should you avail yourself of the £569 offer of 14 nights in Barbados (see left) do not fail to go to Garrison Savannah, the local racecourse. Whereas racing in the USA is in terminal decline, with ever fewer racegoers who are neither young nor entirely sane, Barbadians of all ages and sexes celebrate a day at the track with rare exuberance and more noise than you can blare a car horn at.

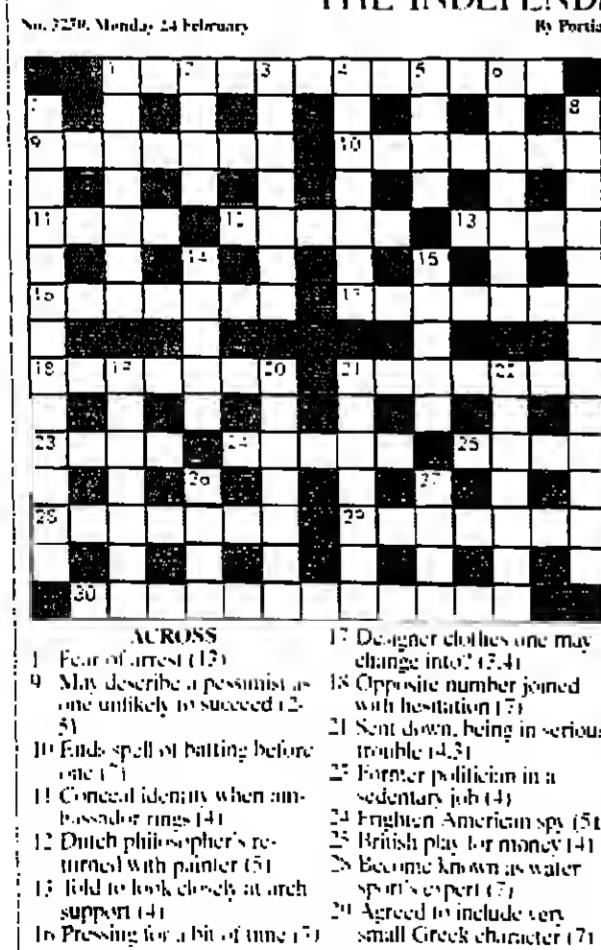
As each horse leaves the parade ring to canter to the start, its supporters cheer while backers of other horses boo, the band plays and the commentator comments. Last year someone was shot dead in an attack on a hot dog stall in the centre of the course, though we noticed nothing; we read about it in the next day's paper.

A horse owned by Robert Sangster was entered in the big race sponsored by Cocksbus Distilleries; it wore every equine aid known to man - earplugs, blinkers, a pacifier, bandages, foam and aft and the horse had been gelded, fired and hobbled, an operation to facilitate breathing; unlike its skittish opponents it went down to the start like a staid battleship and it won, probably because the atmosphere did not get to it.

If April should bring you a Christmas card in an official paid envelope marked "do not open before December" it is the caring ex-MP who has given the matter

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

By Portia



30 Awful secret I held about fellow in Derbyshire (12)

1 He's paid to tear out plant suckers (7)

2 Urban poet of renown (4)

3 Serious English composer leads the way (7)

4 Take out more conservative type of skin (7)

5 Kind of game that's losing money (4)

6 Opening metal container for Italian fellow in charge (7)

7 Variety I cannot see her growing (2,3,8)

8 Reflective prose (6-7)

14 Right about a hospital trust (5)

15 Suppose work to be by popular European (5)

19 Discover her aunt's in a mess (7)

21 Full of soldiers occupied in exercise (7)

22 Decline to fall asleep (4,3)

23 Baffled by less than perfect sound (7)

26 Ticket's almost out of date (4)

27 Instrument's made of metal outside though (4)

17 Designer clothes one may change into (7,4)

18 Opposite number joined with hesitation (7)

21 Sent down, being in serious trouble (4,5)

22 Former politician in a sedentary job (4)

24 English American spy (5)

25 British play for money (4)

28 Become known as water sport expert (7)

29 Agreed to include very small Greek character (7)

• Pub: 125, Newgate Street, London EC1A 7DD. Books available from Booksellers, Newspaper 0800 040 0000. © Independent Publishing Ltd 1997. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

MERCURY

A CABLE & WIRELESS COMPANY

NEVER MIND BT'S LATEST ROUND OF PRICE CUTS.

WE'RE STILL 20% CHEAPER



So they're at it again. Another round of price cuts.

Oh dear, sorry to spoil the party BT, but we're still at least 20% cheaper for international calls weekday evenings and all weekend.

For details **FreeCall 0500 500 366**.

Mercury SmartCall

You don't have to be a genius to see how much you'll save.

Prices and savings will continue to be correct on 19th February 1997, compared against BT's basic rate for international calls of 5 minutes or more, 6pm-8am weekdays and any time at weekends. Savings available for a quarterly fee of £5.75 (inc. VAT).

هذا من الأصل